PC GAMER

To celebrate our biggest issue ever,
you are cordially invited to join us for our 1997

HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

A gala celebration of a year of Gaming Goodness, including
The Year's Top 40 Games, a Massive Holiday Game Preview, and
a round-up of the PC's Best Game Hardware.

We will also be offering...

FULL REVIEWS BUFFET

A gourmet selection, including Jedi Knight, NHL 98, Hexen II,
Age of Empires, and Shadow Warrior

OPEN STRATEGY BAR

Serving definitive guides to Hexen II, Resident Evil, and
a host of other intoxicating hints, tips, and cheats

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COCONUT MONKEY & THE PREVIEWS

Playing the upcoming hits "Star Wars: Rebellion," "SiN," and
"Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor"

And a few surprises...

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YOUR COAT AT THE TABLE OF CONTENTS, AND ENJOY.

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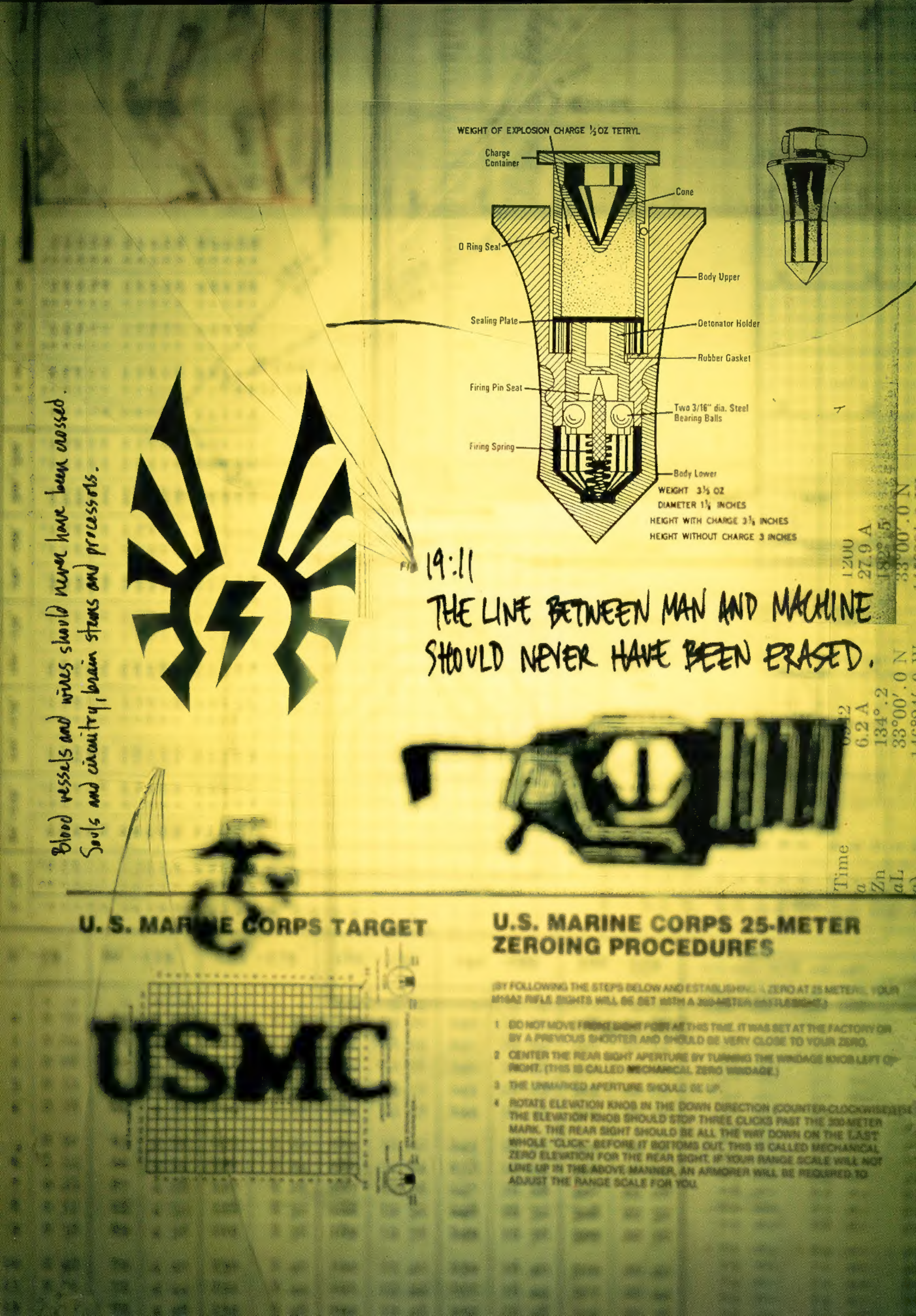

WEIGHT OF EXPLOSION CHARGE ⅓ OZ TETRYL
Charge Container
Cone
O Ring Seal
Body Upper
Sealing Plate
Detonator Holder
Rubber Gasket
Firing Pin Seat
Two 3/16" dia. Steel Bearing Balls
Firing Spring
Body Lower
WEIGHT 3⅓ OZ
DIAMETER 1¼ INCHES
HEIGHT WITH CHARGE 3⅛ INCHES
HEIGHT WITHOUT CHARGE 3 INCHES
1200
27.9 A
182°.5
33°00'.0 N
6.2 A
134°.2
33°00'.0 N
Time
a
Zn
aL
U.S. MARINE CORPS TARGET
USMC

Blood vessels and wires should never have been crossed.
Souls and circuitry, brain stems and processors.

19:11
THE LINE BETWEEN MAN AND MACHINE
SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ERASED.

U.S. MARINE CORPS 25-METER ZEROING PROCEDURES

(BY FOLLOWING THE STEPS BELOW AND ESTABLISHING A ZERO AT 25 METERS, YOUR M16A2 RIFLE SIGHTS WILL BE SET WITH A 300-METER BATTLESIGHT.)

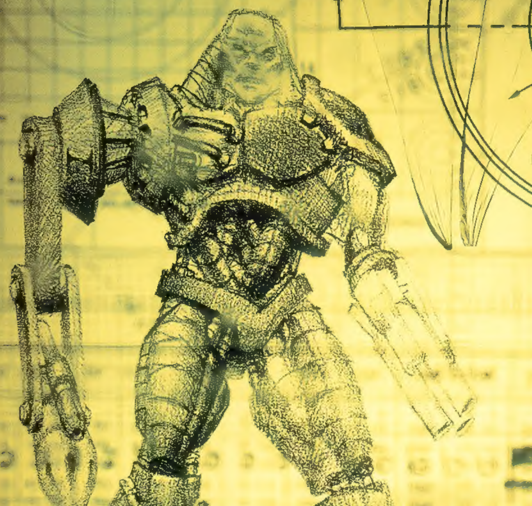
1 DO NOT MOVE FRONT SIGHT POST AT THIS TIME. IT WAS SET AT THE FACTORY OR BY A PREVIOUS SHOOTER AND SHOULD BE VERY CLOSE TO YOUR ZERO.

2 CENTER THE REAR SIGHT APERTURE BY TURNING THE WINDAGE KNOB LEFT OR RIGHT. (THIS IS CALLED MECHANICAL ZERO WINDAGE.)

3 THE UNMARKED APERTURE SHOULD BE UP.

4 ROTATE ELEVATION KNOB IN THE DOWN DIRECTION (COUNTER-CLOCKWISE) THE ELEVATION KNOB SHOULD STOP THREE CLICKS PAST THE 300-METER MARK. THE REAR SIGHT SHOULD BE ALL THE WAY DOWN ON THE LAST WHOLE "CLICK" BEFORE IT BOTTOMS OUT. THIS IS CALLED MECHANICAL ZERO ELEVATION FOR THE REAR SIGHT. IF YOUR RANGE SCALE WILL NOT LINE UP IN THE ABOVE MANNER, AN ARMORER WILL BE REQUIRED TO ADJUST THE RANGE SCALE FOR YOU.

"Quake II, without a doubt, the game of E3."
—*Computer Gaming World*



5·19·47 14:35 ALIEN SCUM CAN KISS THE BUTT OF MY RAIL GUN. Orders came in from the brass this morning. Tonight, I'll be on the C-30K Marine Carrier with the rest of 101st Spaceborne. A little hypersleep, a couple thousand gallons of rationed I.V. Nourishment, a few hundred light years, and we'll be knee-deep in Strogg blood.

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id ACTIVISION®

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www.idsoftware.com

"Quake II will establish id as the pre-eminent blast-masters more than ever before."

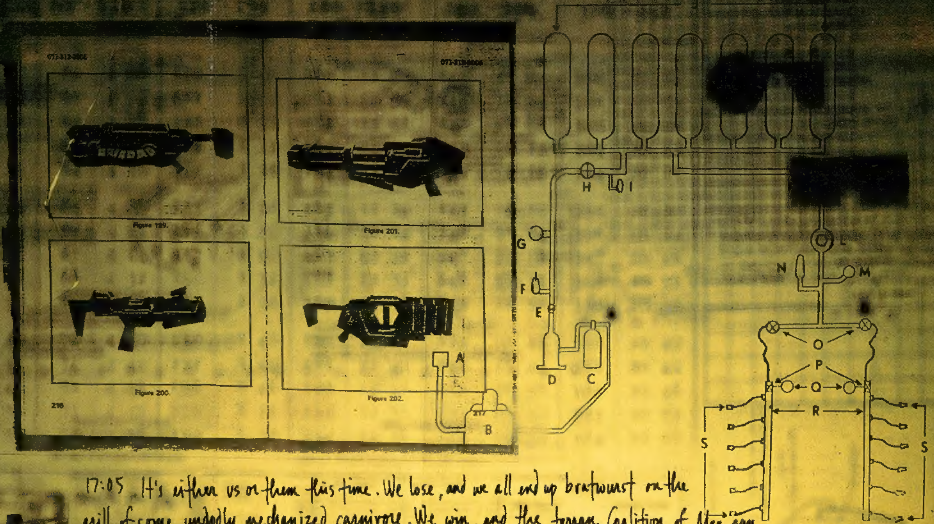
—*PC Gamer*

20:16 I'm now on the carrier and next in line for my goodnight kiss. When I awake from the icy hypersleep, there will be only hell. And there will be hell to pay. My railgun and BFG will make sure of that. The Stroggs killed my parents and my only sister.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I AM NOT A PACIFIST.

QUAKE II™

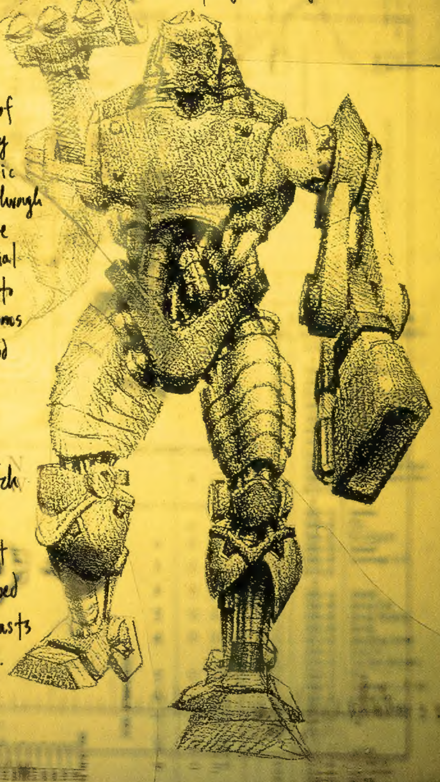
	LINE NO.	EVALUATION
1	Large, complex missions	What you do in one level could affect another. One false move and you could alert security, flood a passageway, or worse.
2	Superior artificial intelligence	The enemy is far from stupid. They will evade attacks, maneuver into strategic attack locations, and hunt your ass down.
3	Intense environments	Man gun turrets. Blow up subways. Smash glass. Toss grenades with perfect control. Duck to evade hits. Give them Hell.



17:05 It's either us or them this time. We lose, and we all end up bratwurst on the grill of some ungodly mechanized carnivore. We win, and the Terran Coalition of Man can start rebuilding the cities on Mars, Olympus, even Earth. Who knows - they might even get the old interplanetary football league going again.
God, I miss Monday Night Football.

18:03 Grotesque images of Stroggs have been filling my sleep at night. Their metallic spines jutting awkwardly through muscle, skin and connective tissue, masks of human facial skin smeared and bonded to their cyber-alloy heads, crude but powerful weapons jammed into oozing, gaping sockets. Thank God the endless sleep ahead is dreamless.

19:42 You learn the hard way in the outer sector... Like never get into a drinking match with a three-headed Bvkan. Never assume a Strogg is dead even when he's nothing but bloody scraps of shrapnel. And never go to bed with a Kabaul no matter how many breasts she has.



QUAKE II

Product Information Number 89

PC GAMER

VOLUME 4 • NUMBER 12 • DECEMBER 1997

Cover Story

HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA 84

Every year, around this time, *PC Gamer* gets into the festive spirit in a big way, with our ultimate guide to Gaming Goodness for the holiday season. We round up the top 40 games of the past year, take a look ahead to the big games set for holiday release, and recommend the best choices in hardware and educational software. It's everything you need to make sure you don't put a foot wrong during the festivities...

TOP 40 GAMES
PAGE 86

PREVIEWS
PAGE 107

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Hardware

277 The Hard Stuff

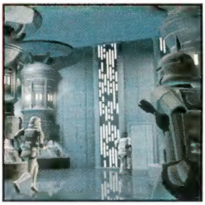
You name it — if it's hard, we've got it. Complete PCs, controllers, sound systems, graphics cards... all this and more in our regular monthly dose of peripheral party-time.

Scoops

46 SiN

Ritual Entertainment's entry into this year's 3D action war promises a lot, and early evidence suggests it might well deliver the goods.

52 Rebellion



LucasArts' long-awaited real-time strategy game is nearing completion, and it's starting to look pretty darned good.

56 Populous: The Third Coming

Bullfrog's first game since the departure of Peter Molyneux is a follow-up to a game he created. Can it succeed without him?

60 C&C: Sole Survivor

Westwood Studios is bringing the world of *Command & Conquer* to the online action arena, and the results could be explosive.

Reviews

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Double the demos! Double the fun!

Resident Evil
THE TOP 10 DEMOS of '97
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There's all kind of game industry wheeler-dealer going on this month that will doubtless affect *you*, the gamer. We've got the low-down on these movings and shakings, along with all the latest games in Under Construction.

316 Extended Play

T. Liam McDonald

Tom finally gets his hands on the long-awaited version 2.0 of the classic *EF2000*, and finds himself becoming a 3D acceleration evangelist in the process.

320 The Learning Game

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Heidi casts her ever-critical eye over a selection of software packages that aim to make learning to type fun for kids, with mixed results.

327 Multi-Play

Jason Bates

Jason offers some analysis as competetive online gaming stands on the verge of becoming a professional sport.

328 Alternate Lives

Michael Wolf

After playing a slew of console-based roleplaying games, Mike wonders if the PC's RPG community might be able to learn a few things from their example.

330 The Desktop General

William R. Trotter

Trotter looks at changes in the market as a big-name publisher runs for cover, and gets round to playing some long-neglected titles.

332 Sim Column

Dan Bennett

MicroProse's latest retrospective compilation gives Dan a chance to reflect on just how much flight sims have changed over the years.

340 Strategy Central

Comprehensive guides to *Hexen II, The Space Bar, Resident Evil,* and *Age of Empires* make up this month's section, along with the latest readers' requests.

383 Letters

It's our chance to have your say, or perhaps send us a "Happy Holidays" card to brighten up our offices.

391 Reviews Index

You'll find every game and every piece of hardware *PC Gamer* has reviewed this year in our 1997 Reviews Index — don't read it at all at once, you'll get sick.

456 Next Issue

A new year is upon us, and *PC Gamer* will be ringing it in in style...

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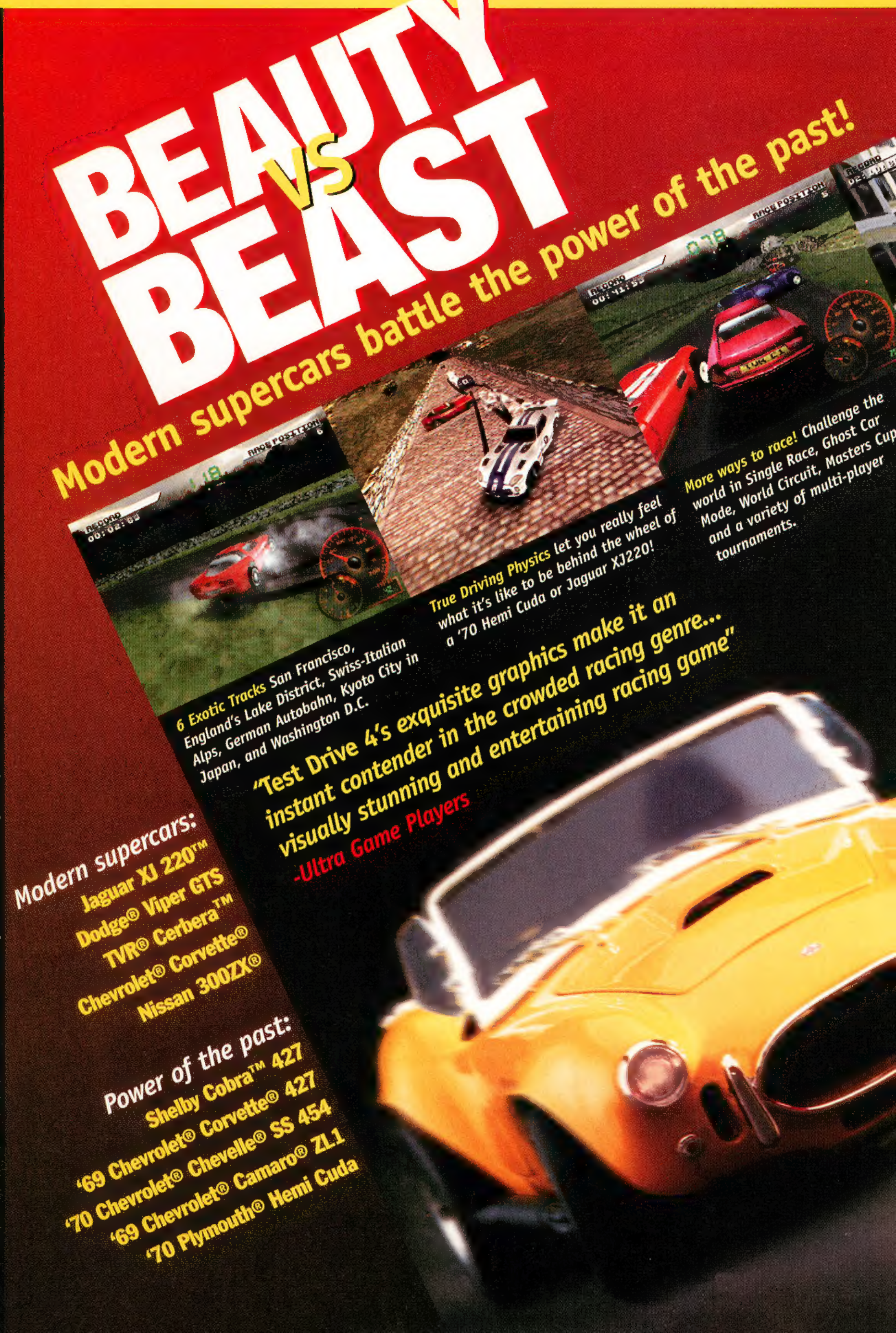
Happy Holidays!

Around this time of year, there's nothing I enjoy more than sitting in front of a roaring fireplace and giving my chestnuts a good roasting. Well, that's not strictly true — for me and the rest of the *PC Gamer* crew, the best thing about the Holidays is the seasonal avalanche of blockbuster games it inevitably brings. At the end of what I think's been rather a meager year for quality PC games, all the signs are that we'll be getting some real goodies to close out the year and see us into 1998. But what will next year bring, and how to prepare? It's exactly those questions that compel us to put together our massive Holiday Extravaganza this time every year, to give you the chance to cash in on the season of giving to maximum effect and fill your stocking with the stuff you need to ensure plenty of Gaming Goodness in the year ahead. This year's Extravaganza is even more, er, extravagant than usual — after introducing The Hard Stuff to *PC Gamer* this year, we've now made hardware an even bigger part of our gift guide. For my two cents, I'd advise you to make sure you have a 3D accelerator card on the top of your wish-list before stuffing it up the chimney this year — 1998 is going to be a mighty cold place for PC gamers to be without one. In the meantime, enjoy this monster of an issue (yes, it's our biggest ever) and get ready for *PC Gamer*'s other monster annual event coming up next month — the Ultimate Strategy Guide. If you thought last year's was big, you ain't seen nothing yet...

Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief



BEAUTY VS BEAST

Modern supercars battle the power of the past!

6 Exotic Tracks San Francisco, England's Lake District, Swiss-Italian Alps, German Autobahn, Kyoto City in Japan, and Washington D.C.

True Driving Physics let you really feel what it's like to be behind the wheel of a '70 Hemi Cuda or Jaguar XJ220!

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> "Test Drive 4's exquisite graphics make it an instant contender in the crowded racing genre... visually stunning and entertaining racing game"
>
> -Ultra Game Players

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'69 Chevrolet® Corvette® 427

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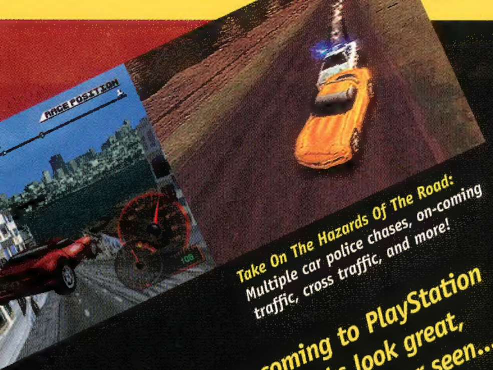

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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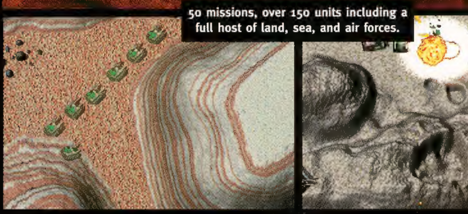
Download new units
from www.cavedog.com
Use the 3-D terrain as
cover against attack.


50 missions, over 150 units including a
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Devastating amphibious assaults.

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Extensive multiplayer and internet support.

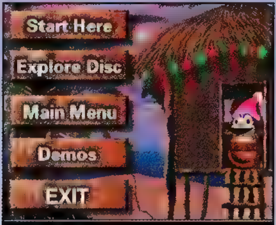
Product Information Number 150

Double CD Bonanza!

Happy Holidays from all of us at *PC Gamer*! As a special treat for you this month, we got two (count 'em, *two*) CDs chock-full of the best in Gaming Goodness! From *Resident Evil* to the best demos of 1997, it's all here! Make sure you read the installation notes carefully, though, because *The CD* installs differently this month.

The Dual Swap

Since this month's demos span two CDs, you'll occasionally be asked to swap discs. When this happens, just pop open your CD-ROM drive, slide in the other CD, and close your drive — that's it! The program will automatically detect when the correct CD is in the drive, and it'll continue its installation.



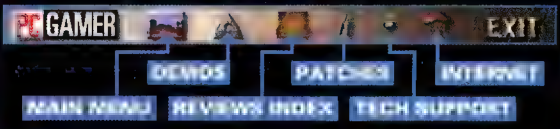
From this screen, you can go straight to the demos, the main menu, or click the Start Here button to view the intro.

Quick Start for The CD

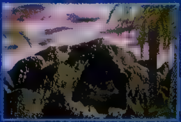
To get to Coconut Monkey's Island Paradise, you'll need to install some files on your computer.

1. Insert *The CD*.
2. If you're using Windows 95, install *The CD* by clicking the Start button, then choosing Run. Type in "X:\SETUP95\SETUP95.EXE" (where X: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) in the box, and smack Enter to start the installation process. If you're using Windows 3.1, you'll want to select Run from the File menu under the Program Manager, and type in "X:\SETUP31\SETUP31.EXE" and press Return.
3. Follow the prompts. The installation process will copy over a few files to your hard drive into the \PCGAMER directory (or wherever you choose to install it). When it's finished, you can double-click on the "PC Gamer December 97 Disc 3.9" icon to start *The CD*'s interface.

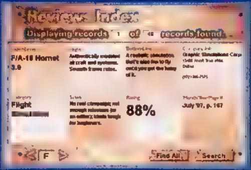
FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND



REVIEWS INDEX



The Reviews Index contains info on every review we've ever run, including the Highs, Lows, and Bottom Line. The arrows will scroll through the index, and there's a search button to help you find any review by title.



Reviews Index

Displaying records 1 of records found.

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0

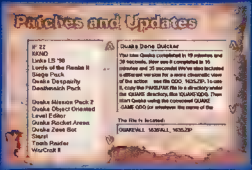
Flight

88%

July '97, p. 167

PATCHES

The Patches & Updates section shows a description and location for each of the patches on *The CD*, as well as all of the add-on levels we've included for *Quake*, *WarCraft II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Doom II*.



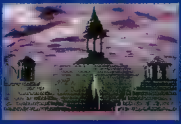
Patches and Updates

IF 22
KKND
Links LS '98
Lords of the Realm II
Siege Pack
Quake Despairity
Deathmatch Pack
Quake Mission Pack 2
Quake Object Oriented Level Editor
Quake Rocket Arena
Quake Zeus Bot
Stars!
Tomb Raider
WarCraft II

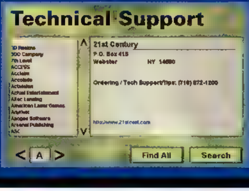
Quake Done Quicker

The file is located:

TECH SUPPORT



Our Technical Support database includes contact information for many game companies. The arrows will let you scroll through the selections, plus there's a search button so you can find any company by name.



Technical Support

3D Realms
3DO Company
7th Level
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Acclaim
Accolade
Activision
Actual Entertainment
Allec Lansing
American Laser Games
Anytime
Apogee Software
Arsenal Publishing
ASK

21st Century
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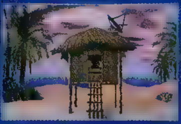
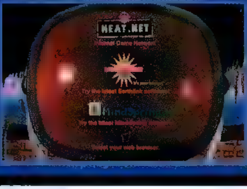
Webster NY 14580

INTERNET

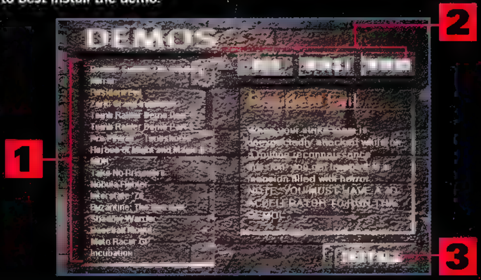


At the Internet Hut, you can install any of the online services on *The CD*. You can also select your web browser to connect to the Internet — very handy for getting online info if you have problems with a demo.



PLAYING THE DEMOS

This is where you go to install the many demos on *The CD*. When you first enter this screen, a list of all the demos will appear in the left column. **1** Click on the DOS, WIN 3.1, and WIN 95 buttons. **2** This will break the demos down into their respective categories. The INSTALL button **3** will allow you to install a demo and, if applicable, connect to that company's web site (you'll have to first select your browser from the Internet Hut). Occasionally, some of these demos won't install from our front end. In these cases, a message will appear instructing you on how to best install the demo.



System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

NOTE: These requirements are for loading our front-end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Attention Win95 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end should work fine in Windows. To install and run DOS games, you will need to reboot into a DOS session.

Free Demos!

Newsstand buyers have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s World Wide Web site at *www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and daily gaming news.

2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 468-2500 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only $7.95 shipping and handling.

Disc Editors' Note

Many of the Windows 95 demos require Microsoft's DirectX to run properly. To save room, we've put a single copy of the latest version of DirectX in its own directory. To install it, simply run the program DXSETUP.EXE in the \DIRECTX directory on *The CD*. If you have any problems with DirectX, you can contact Microsoft's technical support at (206) 637-9308.

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the right directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter.

For example, to install the *Man of War* demo, at the DOS Prompt, type "CD\X" where X is the name of your CD drive. Then type "CD\MOWDEMO". Then type MOWDEMO.EXE and press Enter. The demo of *Man of War* will then be installed on your computer. If you're running Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, you can instead use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command for a Windows-based demo.

* on right = Requires Microsoft DirectX. Install it by running DXSETUP.EXE in the \DIRECTX directory on either CD.

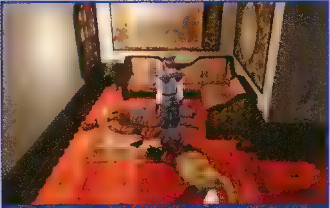
Demo	Disc	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
Resident Evil*	1	\	SETUP.EXE	10	WIN95
Broken Sword*	2	\	SETUP.EXE	10	WIN95
The Top 10 Demos of '97	2	*VARIOUS*	*VARIOUS*	13	*VARIOUS*
Zork Grand Inquisitor*	2	\ZGI_DEMO	SETUP.EXE	14	WIN95
Dark Earth*	2	\DKEDEMO	SETUP.EXE	14	WIN95
Pro Pinball: Timeshock!*	1	\PPTSDEMO	SETUP.EXE	19	WIN95
You Don't Know Jack Volume 3*	1	\JACK3	JACK3DEM.EXE	19	WIN95
Take No Prisoners*	1	\TNPDEMO	SETUP.EXE	21	WIN95
Nebula Fighter*	1	\NEBULA	NEBULA95.EXE	21	WIN95
Byzantine: The Betrayal	1	\BYZANTIN	SETUP.EXE	23	WIN95
Baseball Mogul	1	\BBMOGUL	SETUP.EXE	23	WIN95
Incubation*	1	\INCUBATE	INCUDEMO.EXE	24	WIN95
Nuclear Strike*	1	\NSTRIKE	NUKEPC.EXE	24	WIN95
Worms 2*	1	\WORMS2	SETUP.EXE	25	WIN95
Shipwreckers!*	1	\SHIPWRCK	SW.EXE	25	WIN95
Entrepreneur*	1	\ENT	ENTDEMO.EXE	31	WIN95
The Game Club	1	\GAMECLUB	JCR2.EXE	31	WIN31
Civil War Generals II	1	\CWG2DEMO	SETUP.EXE	33	WIN31
Man of War	1	\MOWDEMO	MOWDEMO.EXE	33	DOS
Dark Angel*	1	\DADEMO	SETUP.EXE	34	WIN95
Golf Pro	2	\GOLFPRO	GPDINST.EXE	34	DOS
Steel Panthers III	1	\SP3_DEMO	INSTALL.EXE	36	DOS
7th Legion*	1	\7THDEMO	7THSW1.EXE	37	WIN95
Quake Stuff	2	\QUAKE	*VARIOUS*	38	-
Try Before You Buy Store	2	\STORE	*VARIOUS*	38	WIN95
MindSpring	2	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	39	WIN95
HEAT	2	\HEAT	KATALYST1_2.EXE	39	WIN95
EarthLink	2	\EARTHL\14DAY\TA	SETUP.EXE	39	WIN95
		\EARTHL\3DAY\TA	SETUP.EXE	39	WIN95
Patches	2	\PATCHES		317	
DirectX 5.0	Both	\DIRECTX	DXSETUP.EXE		WIN95

Resident Evil

Win95

Company: Virgin Interactive
Tech Support: (714) 833-1999
Category: Action/Adventure
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0a or higher; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 3D accelerator video card (see list below)
Install: DISC ONE: \SETUP.EXE

One of the Sony PlayStation's biggest hits has come to PC in all its gruesome, corny, B-movie glory. When a squad of highly trained personnel from S.T.A.R.S. (Special Tactics and Rescue Services) investigates a series of bizarre murders, all of Bravo Team goes missing. The members of Alpha Team are brought in to find out what happened to their compatriots and soon find themselves in a huge, mysterious mansion. That's where you step in; you can choose to play as Chris Redfield or Jill Valentine, and you must explore this creepy old house and fight the denizens within.


You'll encounter all sorts of eerie things in the mansion, including the decapitated corpse of a former Bravo team member.

You can use your keyboard, joystick, or gamepad to control your character. To use your keyboard, look at the control keys listed here. The tricky part is the action key — you must hold down X to get your character into ready mode, then press C to fire your gun or swing your knife. The same goes for aiming up or down — with X held down, push the up or down arrows, then press C to perform an action. Before you can use any of your weapons, you must first equip them by pressing Z to go to the inventory screen. Highlight the item you want to use, press C to bring up a the menu of actions, and press C again to choose an action like Equip (or Use), Check, or Combine. The Check action lets you see a 3D representation of the selected item, and Combine lets you use one item on another, like reloading a pistol by combining a magazine of ammo with the gun.

CONTROL KEYS

Action/Select	C
Dash/Cancel	V
Get Ready	X
Forward/Attack Up	↑
Back/Attack Down	↓
Turn Right	→
Turn Left	←
Sub Screen	Z
Options	A
Quit	Alt + F4

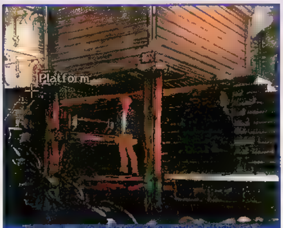
SPECIAL NOTE: You must own one of the following 3D cards (with a minimum of 4MB) in order to play this demo. These are the cards that the full retail version supports: Matrox Mystique, Diamond Monster 3, Orchid Righteous 3, Creative 3D Blaster, Canopus Total 3D, and Intergraph Intense 3D 100.

Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror

Win95

Company: Virgin Interactive
Tech Support: (714) 833-1999
Category: Adventure
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 39MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC TWO: \SETUP.EXE

George Stobbard and Nico Collard are back in an all-new graphic adventure from the people who brought you *Circle of Blood*. This time, Nico calls up George to investigate a strange rock she has received. On the way to a meeting with a professor of archeology, the pair is attacked, and Nico is kidnapped. In the demo, George tracks his quarry to the docks in Marseilles, France, where he thinks Nico is held.



Unlike in *Circle of Blood*, the lighting in different areas of *Broken Sword* can affect the appearance of your characters.

The game is simple to play; it's pretty standard graphic adventure fare. It's all mouse-based, with the cursor changing shape depending on the current action. To perform an action, left-click the mouse button. To hear a description of what you're looking at, right-click. The same is true for your inventory — a left-click will pick up and use an item, and a right-click will examine it. To access your inventory, move the mouse cursor to the bottom of the screen. Move the cursor to the top of the screen to access system functions like saving your game, adjusting the sound, or quitting.

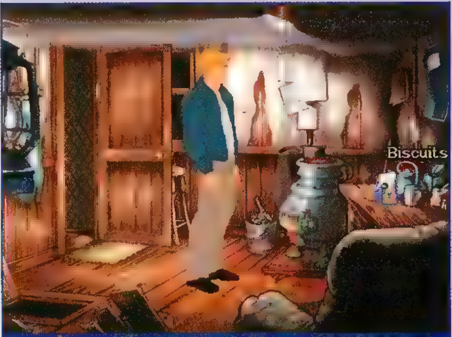


Figure out how to get into the watchman's hut, and you're well on your way toward getting into the docks.

The demo introduces you to George and lets you experiment a bit with the game's possibilities. You've got to figure out how to get past the night watchman and make your way into the docks, but you'll have to deal with his dog as well. The full game takes you from France to South America, and you'll control George and Nico on different occasions.

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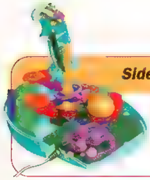

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The Top 10 Demos of '97

Tomb Raider

Install: DISC TWO:
\TOMBRAID\TOMB1\SETUP.EXE (Part One)
\TOMBRAID\TOMB2\SETUP.EXE (Part Two)

Lara Croft has captured the hearts of gamers world-wide. Embark once again on her journey through animal-infested caverns in search of an elusive artifact. We've put together both demos (Part One and Part Two of the second level from the full game) for your enjoyment. Also, we've included special versions of Part One for several 3D accelerator cards (see the list below). For space considerations, we've kept them compressed as .ZIP files; use the PKUnzip or WinZip utilities to unpack them into a directory called /TOMBRAID. Make sure you create that directory at the root of your hard drive, or you might encounter errors when running the demos.

3D Accelerated Demos:
Rendition: RENDDEMO.ZIP
S3 ViRGE: S2TOMB.ZIP
Power VR: TDEMOPVR
3Dfx: TOMB3DFX.ZIP
Matrox Millenium: TOMBDEMM.ZIP

Lara Croft goes up against everything from bears and wolves to marauding zombies in the original *Tomb Raider*.

Heroes of Might and Magic II

Install: DISC TWO: \HEROES2\HEROES2.EXE

It's probably one of the best turn-based strategy games ever. The demo will let you work your way through a single standard game map (Broken Alliance), while the full version contains 36 maps, a full campaign, and support for six-players in multi-player mode. We think you'll agree that this game is dangerously addictive.

MDK

Install: DISC TWO: \MDK\MDKZIP95.EXE

Intense action and varied gameplay made *MDK* a hit in the *PC Gamer* offices, and the demo was our first indication of how good this game could really be. Explore a major part of the first level, and you'll understand what we mean. It's explosive mayhem, and you're at the center of it.

Interstate '76

Install: DISC TWO: \I76DEMO\I76.EXE

Welcome to an alternate 1976, where funk and muscle cars rule the day, and auto-vigilantes rule the highway. As Groove Champion, you're a hard-driving road warrior out to avenge the death of his sister. It's you against the world — fortunately for you, your car has been customized with a machine gun and rocket launchers!

SUSP.
BRAKES
WHEEL

Give up the funk in *Interstate '76*, a game that'll have you groovin' to the tunes while you take out the baddies.

Shadow Warrior

Install: DISC TWO: \SWDEMO\INSTALL.EXE

As Lo Wang, expert ninja, it's up to you to battle the minions of Master Zilla. Here's a first-person shooter from the makers of *Duke Nukem 3D*; with more action than you can shake a bloody katana at.

It's gruesome and bloody, but a ninja's work is never done in *Shadow Warrior*.

Moto Racer GP

Install: DISC TWO: \MOTORACE\PLAYDEMO.EXE

Here's the best arcade-style racing game we've seen on the PC in ages. If you've tried a demo of *Moto Racer* on our CD before, be advised that this one is different: it features two completely new tracks. You can download these new tracks for use in the full version of *Moto Racer*, but we give you the chance to preview them up close and personal.

Shadows of the Empire

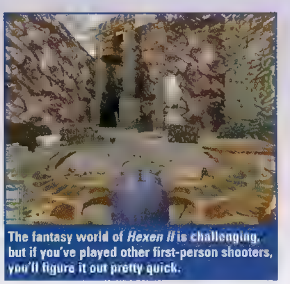
Install: DISC TWO: \SHADOWS\SHADOWS.EXE

Join the Rebellion's struggle against the Empire. Starting on the ice planet Hoth, the demo puts you in control of a snow speeder fighting an Imperial invasion of the Rebel secret base. The full version puts you in many other Star Wars-style situations. This port from the Nintendo 64 supports video acceleration, so if you've got the 3D horsepower, expect to see some very pretty sights.

Hexen II

Install: DISC TWO: \HEXEN2\H2DEMO.EXE

Pushing the *Quake* engine to new limits, *Hexen II* will draw you in to a fantasy world filled with magic and monsters. If you've played *Quake*, you know how to play *Hexen II*, but you'll find yourself in a completely different setting and surrounded by gorgeous graphics.



The fantasy world of *Hexen II* is challenging, but if you've played other first-person shooters, you'll figure it out pretty quick.

Links LS

Install: DISC TWO: \LINKSLS\SETUP.EXE

The Links series of golf simulations has always led the pack with its authenticity and beauty, and *Links LS* is no exception. Give it a shot, and you'll see just what made it a hit.

Zork Grand Inquisitor

Win95

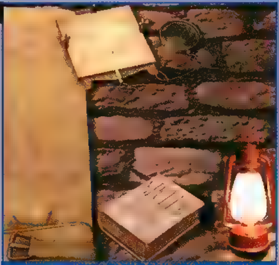
Company: Activision
Tech Support: (310) 479-5644
Category: Adventure
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \ZGI_DEMO\SETUP.EXE

Zork Grand Inquisitor sends you on yet another journey through the Great Underground Empire in a quest to restore magic to the land of Frobozz. Incorporating much more of the classic Zorkian humor and personality than *Nemesis* did, *Zork Grand Inquisitor* will bring you into contact with people and places you haven't visited since the very first Zork text adventure.

This well hides more than you might expect. Be sure you check your inventory while looking at it....

The demo challenges you to open three doorways onto various parts of the Great Underground Empire. Along the way, you'll use your magic spells, items you find, and your wits. Once you've opened all three doors, you've reached the end of the demo, but you'll get a glimpse of some scenes from full version of the game.

Playing the game is pretty straightforward — just use the mouse to control the cursor. It'll change shape and/or color to indicate an action. The game lets you look at your environment through all 360 degrees; just move the cursor to one side or the other to turn in that direction. If the cursor turns yellow, that means you can perform an action, cast a spell, or use an inventory item on whatever it's pointing at. If you reach a point where you can't spin around to look anymore, you can back out of it by moving the cursor to the bottom of the screen and clicking when it turns into a backward-pointing arrow.


What would a Zork adventure be without an inventory bag, a spell book, and a magic lantern?

Moving the cursor to the top of the screen brings up one of three different menus. The system menu hides at the top of the screen, in the middle; you use it to save, load, and quit your game. Move the cursor to the top right corner, and your spell list will scroll out — choose a spell, then click on the spell's target. Finally, if you move the cursor to the top left corner, your inventory list will scroll out, and you can choose an item, then click on whatever you want to use the item on.

BONUS

Also on *The CD* (in \ZGI_DEMO\TXTGAMES), is the new text adventure, *Zork: The Undiscovered Underground*, as well as the first three Zork adventures. If you missed it the first time, now's your chance to experience the fun!

Dark Earth

Win95

Company: MicroProse
Tech Support: (510) 522-1164
Category: Action/Adventure
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 26MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC TWO: \DKEDEMO\SETUP.EXE

In *Dark Earth*, from French developer Kalisto, you'll embark on a dark journey through a ravaged landscape filled with terror and beauty. This demo will show you a sample of what the full game has in store. You play Arkhan, a Guardian of Fire. You can explore the headquarters of his elite fighting force and even spar with a couple of different partners to get the feel for combat.

Much like the Alone in the Dark or Ecstatica series of games, the characters are made up of 3D polygons. You move Arkhan with the keyboard, using the left and right arrow keys to turn up-arrow key to walk forward. Take a look at the control keys listed here to get an idea of what Arkhan can do.

The demo ends when you leave the building, but you can still perform a lot of actions and speak to quite a few different characters. Try heading upstairs after Zed to engage in a bit of hand-to-hand combat — especially against the Captain of the guard, who'll give you quite a run for your money. As you wander around, Provost Dhorkan will find you and tell you what to do next. Of course, as soon as you walk outside to find the temple of the Sun God, the demo will end, so don't feel rushed to follow his orders.

You can really see the detail in the character animations right from the beginning, when Arkhan wakes up next to his, uh...lady friend.

CONTROL KEYS

Move	↑ ↓ → ←
Run Forward	Shift + ↑
Sidestep	Shift + → or ←
Perform Action	Spacebar
Combat Mode On/Off	C
Easy Combat	Control
Norm. Combat	Control + Arrows
Special Attack	Control Shift ↑
Main Menu	Escape
Pause	P
Open Inventory	Backspace
Put Object Away	0
Review Dialogs	F7

Combat
CHESS

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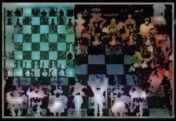

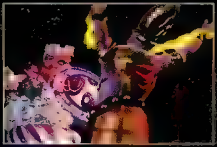

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MATURE
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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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The downside:
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Win95

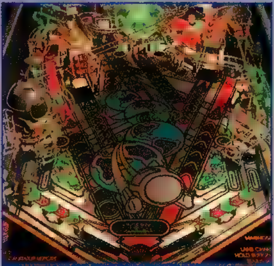
Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

Company: Empire Interactive
Tech Support: (301) 916-9302
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 29MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: DISC ONE: \PPTSDEMO\SETUP.EXE

It might seem like a simple task to create a PC pinball game, but it's actually very tough to get it just right; most gamers can't really say if a high-tech fighter sim or a Formula 1 racing game feels right, but everybody has played pinball. Creating a PC game that looks, sounds, and responds like a real pinball is an impressive feat — which is why we're so pleased with *Pro Pinball: TimeShock!* and its authentic gameplay.

This demo lets you play to 50 million points, or until you activate some of the game's special features. You play it just the way you would an arcade machine, with the the left and right Shift keys standing in for the flipper buttons and the Enter key taking the place of the plunger. If you like to use a little English when you play pinball, you'll find the spacebar bumps the table forward, while the left and right Alt keys will nudge to either side. Hit S to start a new game, and you're on your way.

As with any real pinball machine, you'll have to play *TimeShock!* for a while to learn where you can score the most points and figure out how to trigger bonuses. You'll have to be a real pinball wizard to reach the demo's 50 million-point limit.



The demo limit is only 50 million, but you'll be lucky to score that high without a lot of practice.

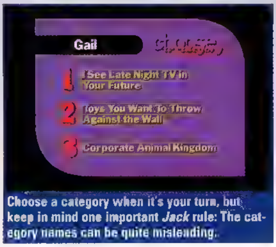
Win95

You Don't Know Jack V.3

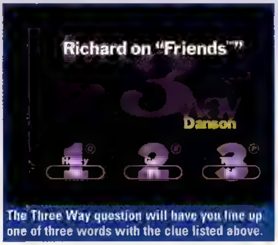
Company: Berkeley Systems
Tech Support: (510) 549-2300
Category: Trivia
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 23MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: DISC ONE: \JACK3\JACK3DEM.EXE

The You Don't Know Jack series of trivia games plays just like a television game show, but it's much more hip (and more laden with innuendo) than "Jeopardy" or "Wheel of Fortune." The full version of *You Don't Know Jack Volume 3* contains much more than you'll see in the demo, but you can get a good feel for the game from this short introduction. *Volume 3* adds some tricky new question types, like Three Way, which challenges you to hit your buzzer to indicate a match on the screen before any other players do.

The demo automatically sets up a game for three people; you can't choose your name here, but of course you can in the full version. Play is simple — one player chooses a category, and when the question is asked, you smack your buzzer and press the number of the answer you think is correct. From left to right, the players' buzzers are the Q, B, and P keys.


Gail
choose
1 I See Late Night TV in Your Future
2 Toys You Want To Throw Against the Wall
3 Corporate Animal Kingdom

Choose a category when it's your turn, but keep in mind one important *Jack* rule: The category names can be quite misleading.


Richard on "Friends"?
3 Way
Danson
1 Q
2 B
3 P

The Three Way question will have you line up one of three words with the clue listed above.

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Product Information Number 145

Nebula Fighter

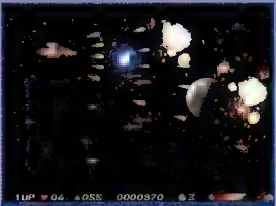
Company: One Reality
Tech Support: (800) 392-6356
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: DISC ONE: \NEBULA\INSTALL.EXE

In the far future, peace has been forced upon the population of Earth by terrorists who've banded together to overthrow the world's government. When a spacefaring race known as the Venishians encounters Earth, the terrorists realize there's more than just their planet to conquer, and they immediately set out on a quest to overthrow the alien race. That's where you come in — your job is to penetrate the outer defenses of the Venishians and set up camp around the asteroid belt in our solar system to await backup.

This side-scrolling shooter may remind you of earlier days, when *Defender* ate all of your quarters, or when *Thunder Force II* tied up your Sega Genesis for hours at a time. *Nebula Fighter* is simplicity itself, but it's also a classic dose of addictive fun.

Take a look at the online help to get an idea of the power-ups you can expect to find. The game's controls are simple — use the arrow keys to move your ship, the right-hand Control key to fire, the right-hand Shift key to switch weapons — and hit the right-hand Control and Alt keys at the same time to unleash the deadly Smart Bomb.

In two-player mode, the second player uses the R, T, Q, and A keys to move; the left-hand Alt key fires, the Z key cycles weapons, and the combination of the two lets the Smart Bomb loose.



There'll be a lot happening on the screen as your weapons become more powerful; don't let yourself be too distracted by all the explosions.

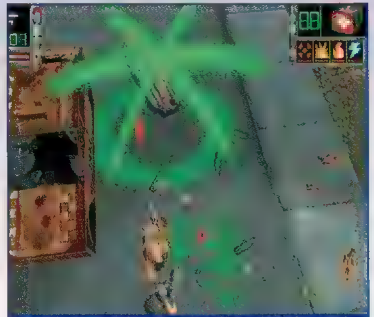
Take No Prisoners

Company: Red Orb Entertainment
Tech Support: (415) 382-4700
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 28MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: DISC ONE: \TNPDEMO\SETUP.EXE

It's classic first-person action like you've never seen it before — from a third-person perspective! You can see all the monsters, all the gore, and all the mayhem from a bird's-eye view that gives you a unique angle on the action.

This demo of Red Orb's latest game lets you play the first level from the full version and witness some of the action it has in store. The controls should be familiar to any fan of *Doom* or *Quake*: you use the arrow keys to move forward, back, and turn; the Control key to fire your weapon; and the Alt key to "strafe" from side to side. For a look at the control keys, press F1 in the game for a help menu full of options.

The perspective takes some getting used to at first, but soon you'll be blasting away creatures all around you. Using the Tab key, you can switch the camera from a fixed position with your character at the bottom, to a free view with your character in the center of the screen. Both views will come in handy at different stages of the game.



You'll see plenty of gore when you kill some of the mutant creatures you meet in *Take No Prisoners.*

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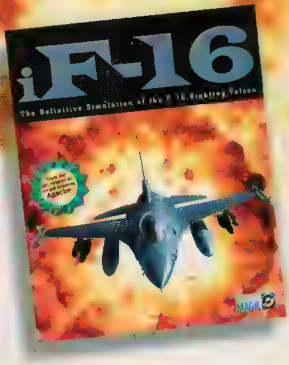

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WIN 95
CD-ROM

TEEN
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Product Information Number 321

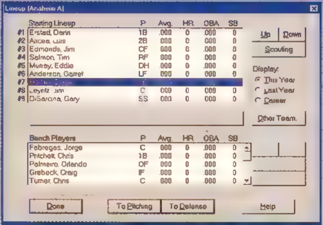
Baseball Mogul

Win95

Company: Infinite Monkey Systems
Tech Support: *www.imonkey.com*
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \BBMOGUL\SETUP.EXE

If you think you can lead a baseball team to victory, now's your chance to prove it. Unlike most baseball games, *Baseball Mogul* doesn't center on action; this one is purely strategy. You make every decision that concerns your team, from the starting lineup to the budget. After setting things up the way you want them, you can start playing a full season. After each game, you can make more decisions about your team, tweaking players and strategies. Your goal, of course, is to lead your team to victory.

When you start the demo, you'll need to fill in the names of all the teams. You don't have to use the real names of major league teams, so feel free to name them anything you want — we're fond of "the Ocelots," ourselves. As you play through the demo, be sure to pay attention to the News Pages, where you can see the details of your team's actions in their latest game. Select Play from the menu, and you can play through an entire season, watching your stats change with every game. You have the option of playing through day by day, week by week, or even getting through half the season at once. From player salaries to the cost of the tickets at the door, everything is under your control!


Lineup (Anaheim A)
Up
Down
Scouting
Display:
This Year
Last Year
Career
Other Team.
Done
To Pitching
To Defense
Help

	Starting Lineup	P	Avg.	HR	OBA	SB
#1	Erstad, Darin	1B	.000	0	.000	0
#2	Alicea, Luis	2B	.000	0	.000	0
#3	Edmonds, Jim	CF	.000	0	.000	0
#4	Salmon, Tim	RF	.000	0	.000	0
#5	Murray, Eddie	DH	.000	0	.000	0
#6	Anderson, Garret	LF	.000	0	.000	0
#7	[illegible]					
#8	Leyritz, Jim	C	.000	0	.000	0
#9	DiSarcina, Gary	SS	.000	0	.000	0

Bench Players	P	Avg.	HR	OBA	SB
Fabregas, Jorge	C	.000	0	.000	0
Pritchett, Chris	1B	.000	0	.000	0
Palmeiro, Orlando	OF	.000	0	.000	0
Grebeck, Craig	IF	.000	0	.000	0
Turner, Chris	C	.000	0	.000	0

You can set your lineup and configure your players however you like on your path to victory.

Byzantine: The Betrayal

Win95

Company: Discovery Multimedia
Tech Support: *tech_support@discovery.com*
Category: Adventure
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 17MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \BYZANTIN\SETUP.EXE

Enter the mysterious world of Istanbul, where murder and conspiracy are the order of the day. This graphic adventure, filmed on location, will take you through the real city — what you see on the screen is what you'd see if you hopped on a jet and flew there for a visit. Part of Discovery's Planet Explorer series, *Byzantine* strives to teach you a bit about the Turkish culture while providing an entertaining adventure.

The demo is a small glimpse into the depths of the game. You can examine the extravagant detail of the artwork, peruse the story behind the mystery, and learn a little bit about Istanbul itself. You can also explore some of the areas in the game.

Moving around is simple enough — the main menu will tell you where to go to see the different aspects of the game. When you look around the game's various locations, (go to the Map section and select a highlighted locale), the mouse controls your movement — just click on the arrows at the bottom of the screen to turn your view to the left or right. You'll see some fantastic sights, but remember: this particular game world is actually very real.

As you play the game, you'll see the same sights you'd enjoy if you took a trip to the legendary city of Istanbul.

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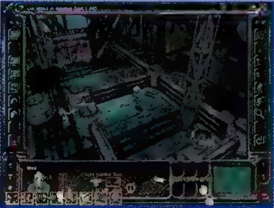
Incubation

Company: Blue Byte Software
Tech Support: (847) 995-9981
Category: Strategy
Required: Win95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 39MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \INCDEMO\INCUBATIONDEMO.EXE

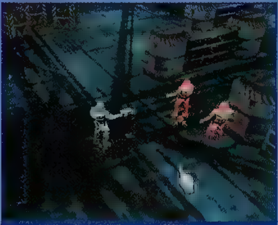
Aliens are invading Earth, and only you can turn them back. This turn-based tactical combat game puts you in control of a squadron of marines fighting the evil Scay'Ger. Outfit your units with defenses and weapons, and take them into the field.



Open these chests to find ammo, experience, and other goodies.

The demo contains the first four levels of the full game's campaign mode, as well as a couple of Instant Action maps, where you can play with some of the meaner weapons from the game. You can also play multi-player against as many as three of your friends in a tactical face-off. The full version contains more than 30 single-player missions, 12 multi-player maps, five Instant Action games, 12 weapon systems, and 11 types of Scay'Ger.

The interface is extremely simple to use. When you start a mission, place your units by clicking on the spots available. When a unit is selected, you'll see small circles appear around it — which is where you can move. The numbers in the circles indicate how many action points you'll have left after the move. Click and hold the left mouse button on the spot you want to move to, and you'll see another circle of dots indicating the direction the unit will face after the move. Move the mouse cursor to the direction you want, and release the button to complete the move. To fire at an enemy unit when it's in range, click on the creature. You can also choose to move other units by selecting them with the mouse cursor.



Keep your squad close together — there are only three of you and a lot of aliens, so don't let them gang up on you.

The 3D engine will let you view the action from any angle you wish. On the menu to the right is series of buttons, and the first three will set your view. In Free Look mode, you can hold down the right mouse button to move the center of your view, and then hold down both buttons to change the direction of the view. Also, in Free Look mode, the left and right arrow keys will rotate the angle of view by 90 degrees in either direction. Experiment a bit to find the direction you like best. You'll want to rotate your view often so those nasty Scay'Ger don't sneak up on you.

Nuclear Strike

Company: Electronic Arts
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium 16MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \NSTRIKE\NUKEPC.EXE

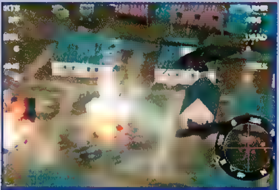
STRIKE is a highly confidential group that prevents wars before they begin. As a member of this elite corps, it's your duty to prevent the deaths of thousands by hitting the enemy before they know you're is coming.

This action-packed demo shows you one sample mission from the full game. The full version of *Nuclear Strike* will put you in charge of 15 vehicles in five different multi-mission campaigns, with full-motion video mission briefings and debriefings.

Use the numeric keypad to control your chopper — take a look at the control keys listed to the right for an idea of what you need to know. Be sure to pay close attention to the radar HUD at the bottom right of the screen; enemies are red, fuel/ammo/friendly units are white, mission objectives are blue, and the yellow square that floats around the outside is your heading. The waypoint indicators are what you'll use most often.

Press Enter to turn on the multi-function display; from that menu, you can set the waypoints to lead you to a specific location, like the next objective. Then just set your heading in line with the arrow, and away you go.

You can try flying the AV-8B Harrier jet and driving the M1 Abrams tank by completing the first mission (destroying the enemy defenses) and hovering over the landing zone next to the vehicle you want to fly (it's blue with a red arrow).



Just about anything in the world of *Nuclear Strike* can be destroyed, including the buildings and other structures.

CONTROL KEYS

Forward/Backward	KEYPAD 8, 2	**Select Weapon**	Shift + WEAPON KEY
Left/Right Turn	KEYPAD 4, 6	**Call Chopper**	D HOLD FOR 1 SEC
Left/Right Jink	KEYPAD 7, 9	**Activate Mouse**	M
Camera View	NUMPAD Enter	**Fire Chaingun**	Spacebar
Enter SMFD	Enter	**Fire Hydra Rocket**	X
Cyde HUD Options	H	**Fire Hellfire Missile**	Z
Jettison Cargo	D	**Fire Sidewinder**	C

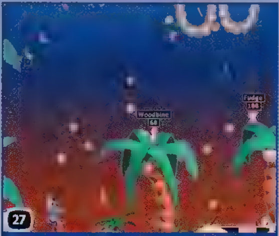
Worms 2

Win95

Company: MicroProse
Tech Support: (510) 522-1164
Category: Action/Strategy
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 21MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \WORMS2\SETUP.EXE

Remember that old shareware game called *Scorched Earth*, where players controlled a tank on a randomly generated battlefield, and the goal to was to destroy the other tanks by blowing them up with an arsenal of weapons? Take that game and add a comic twist, some really wacky weapons, and multi-player support over local-area network for as many as six people, and you'll come close to what *Worms 2* is all about.

In *Worms 2*, you control a team of cute (and heavily armed) worms. You have to aim and fire a variety of weapons and special items, and your goal is to have the last worm standing. The demo gives you one landscape, with two teams of two worms each to battle it out. Playing the game involves using the mouse to survey the battlefield, select the weapon you want to fire off, and — if necessary — choosing a target for weapons like the Homing Missile. The keyboard is used to control the rest of the action.



Once you decide where you want to fire your weapon, just hit the spacebar.

CONTROL KEYS

Move	↑ ↓ → ←
Jump Forward/Drop Weapon/ Trigger/Weapon on Rope	Enter
Jump Backward	Enter Twice Quickly
Vertical Jump	Backspace
Aim Up/Rise on Rope	↑
Aim Down/Lower on Rope	↓
Detach from Rope	Spacebar
Fire Weapon Strength of Shot	Press & Hold Spacebar
Quit	Alt + F4

Although seemingly simple, *Worms 2* requires a lot of strategy and forethought to win. Be sure to look at the README.TXT file and the GUIDES.TXT file, both of which are accessible through the Start menu of the demo. GUIDES.TXT explains many of the weapons in detail, describing things like how to swing on a rope like Tarzan and drop a sheep on an enemy's head.

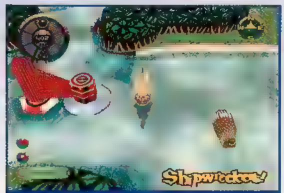
The full version will contain much more than just weapons, more worms, and multi-player support; you can also configure your own weapons load-out, and the randomly generated terrain will provide endless replay value.

Shipwreckers!

Win95

Company: Psygnosis
Tech Support: (415) 655-8000
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 3D accelerator video card
Install: DISC ONE: \SHIPWRCK\SW.EXE

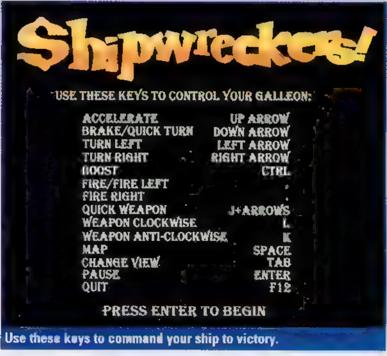
Take to the High Seas and challenge the might of Cap'n Blowfleet, the most feared pirate to captain a ship. This action game from Psygnosis will have you blowing holes in the sides of ships, knocking bomb-dropping parrots out of the sky, and avoiding tentacled sea monsters. Your goal: take over all of Cap'n Blowfleet's ports and steal all of his treasure. It won't be easy, and there'll be plenty of hazards to avoid, and even some puzzles to solve.



You'll run into everything from a "sea saw" to a sea creature as you go about taking over all the ports in the area.

Use the keyboard to control your vessel. The arrow keys control steering, and the period and comma keys fire your guns to the right or left, respectively. You can cycle through your weapons by pressing the L and K keys — the weapon you've selected appears at the top left of the screen. The white line at the bottom left indicates your health — when it runs out, you're dead. You'll start with three ships. To continue on to other areas of the level, you might have to make sure you've explored every nook and cranny and killed every enemy you can find before the gates will open up. Look at the control keys shown in the picture to the right to learn more about how to control your ship.

If you're heavily damaged, look for an enemy port. If you can defeat its defenses and claim the port as your own, then you'll receive some major repairs to your ship. Also, you can pick up power-ups along the way that will help you in battle, from new weapons to handy treasure chests.



USE THESE KEYS TO CONTROL YOUR GALLEON:

ACCELERATE	UP ARROW
BRAKE/QUICK TURN	DOWN ARROW
TURN LEFT	LEFT ARROW
TURN RIGHT	RIGHT ARROW
BOOST	CTRL
FIRE/FIRE LEFT	,
FIRE RIGHT	.
QUICK WEAPON	J+ARROWS
WEAPON CLOCKWISE	L
WEAPON ANTI-CLOCKWISE	K
MAP	SPACE
CHANGE VIEW	TAB
PAUSE	ENTER
QUIT	F12

PRESS ENTER TO BEGIN

Use these keys to command your ship to victory.

SPECIAL NOTE: This demo (as well as the full version of the game) requires a 3D accelerator. If your accelerator uses one of the following 3D chipsets, you can play the demo in all its graphic splendor: 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics, Diamond Glint, VideoLogic PowerVR, Creative Labs 3D Blaster, Matrox Mystique, Matrox Millenium II.

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Product Information Number 105

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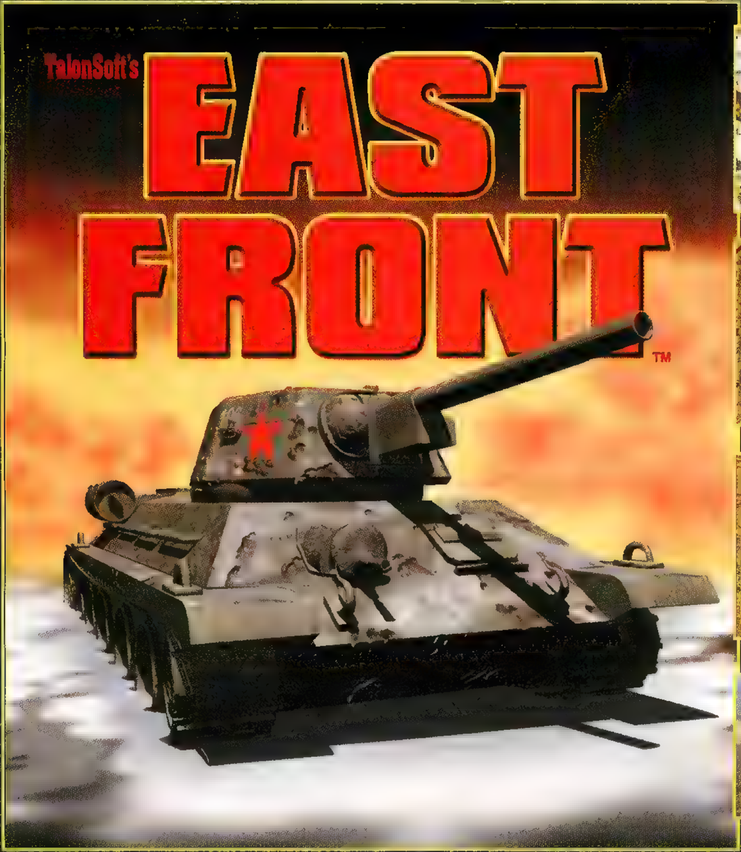
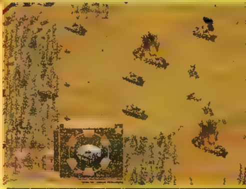


Desperate valor at Yakhroma..



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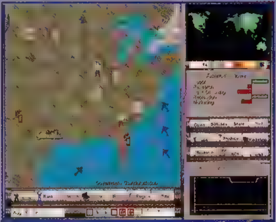
Entrepreneur

Win95

Company: Stardock Systems
Tech Support: (313) 762-0687
Category: Strategy
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \ENT\ENTDEMO.EXE

Ever wonder what it'd be like to run a multi-billion dollar company? Well, now you can see if you truly have the savvy to pull it off in Stardock Systems' new CEO simulator.

The game is pretty complex, so be sure to check out the README.TXT file (accessible through the Start menu for the game). It'll give you detailed instructions on how to play, from setting up your company to running the competition into the ground. The demo lets you play for 15 years of game-time before it forces you to retire, and it allows as many as four players to compete at once. The full version contains much more, including multi-player support for as many as eight players; the option to play on maps other than the Earth; more industries to compete in (rather than just the computer industry represented in the demo); and the ability to upgrade your factories. It also gives you other aspects of business to deal with, like TV presence and the use of "Direct Action" cards. The full version also contains quite a bit more in the way of graphics and video effects to accompany your corporate strategy.


The demo only takes place on Earth, but the full version will let you expand your empire over all sorts of maps!

Build your company from a single office with one executive to a multi-billion-dollar conglomerate. Do you have the brainpower to succeed? Who knows — you might just be the next Bill Gates!

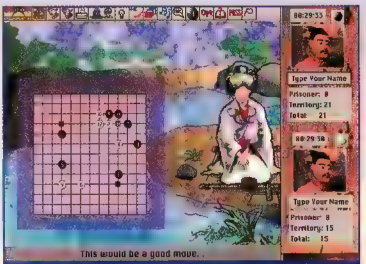
The Game Club

Company: JC Research
Tech Support: (408) 977-14[illegible]
Category: Online Game
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 33MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: DISC ONE: \GAMECLUB\JCR2.EXE

The Game Club is the latest place to play the biggest and best board and action games online against people all over the world. This demo lets you try out a few of the games available on the system. The Stone Master Tryout Edition contains classic boardgames like *Go*, *Nine Men's Morris*, and *Reversi*. This demo also includes the trial version of an action game, *Mission Chameleon*.

Online help explains how to play each of the games. You can play the boardgames with another player at one computer, or you can go online by clicking the appropriate buttons. To play online, you need to make sure you've got a TCP/IP connection, which are available from many Internet service providers around the country.

The action game, *Mission Chameleon*, has a variety of gameplay options. Be sure to click on "*Mission Chameleon* Help" from the Win 95 Start menu (or the Program Manager in Windows 3.1). You'll see what some of your objectives are, and how to best play the demo. The full version contains many more worlds to fight on and more vehicles to control.



This would be a good move.

With the Game Club, you can play classic games like *Go* via the Internet against people all over the world.

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The client is drop-dead gorgeous. Her father is just plain dead—of an apparent suicide. She's certain he was murdered and is willing to do anything to prove it. Tex Murphy, the P.I., is willing to do almost anything to make rent. The investigation leads Tex into the heart of a dark secret. An elite team of specialists have created something unspeakable. Now each of them are marked for death, and so begins the reign of the Overseer.

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"Cozy little place you've got here."

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Product Information Number 85

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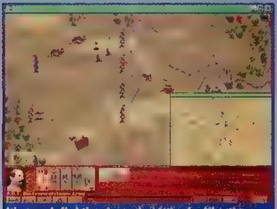
Civil War Generals II

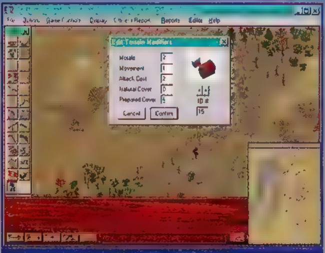
Company: SSI
Tech Support: (206) 644-[illegible]
Category: Wargame
Required: 486; 16MB RAM; 34MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: DISC ONE: \CW2GDEMO\SETUP.EXE

Sierra's Impressions division returns to the War Between the States with a sequel to *Civil War Generals*. This is a turn-based wargame with classic boardgame trappings: hex grids, victory points, morale, and leader counters. The demo contains one of 40 scenarios from the full game — the Battle of Bull Run (or First Manassas to you Rebels out there) — and is a full 19 turns long. You can choose to play as the North or the South, and with the right strategy you should be able to win from either side.


It's tough fighting here, but it looks like the Confederates have things well in hand.

Control is relatively straightforward: to select a unit, right-click on it. All its pertinent details (health, morale, ammo, etc.) will be revealed on a graphic bar at the bottom of the screen. To move, left-click on an open hexagon (one that isn't "ghosted," or grayed out). To attack, be sure there's an enemy unit within range, then left-click on it.

To move your cannons, first change their formation by clicking on the formation icon (a balloon-help box will pop up when you hold the mouse pointer over each icon, so the one you want should be easy to find). Troops move faster when in marching formation, but aren't ready for combat. Change their formation to "line" just as they near the fray. Other things to consider: keep an eye peeled for the victory hexes (each one is marked by a Union or Confederate flag, depending on which side held it last), and occupy them as soon as possible.



The full game contains a versatile scenario editor.

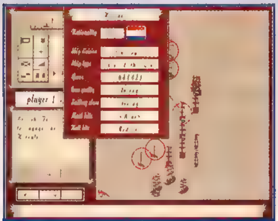
Your cavalry isn't too effective against the larger infantry units, so use them to run around and grab victory hexes.

This demo is only a small sample of the full game, which contains naval units, campaigns, 40 scenarios, multi-player options (including LAN, modem, TCP/IP, and even that old favorite, play by E-mail). It also has a full-blown scenario editor, which lets you recreate most of the engagements from our nation's bloodiest conflict.

Man of War

Company: Virgin Interactive
Tech Support: (800) 874-[illegible]
Category: Simulation
Required: Pentium; 8MB RAM; [illegible] MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \MOWDEMO\MOWDEMO.EXE

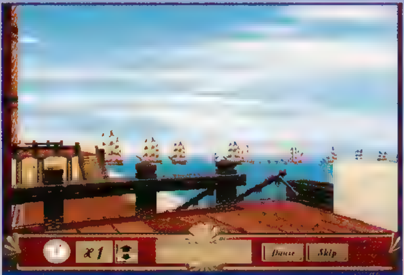
Fragile wooden sailing ships, creaking and groaning beneath billowing canvas, close to within a hundred yards of each other and spit iron and fire from the primitive cannons crammed into their holds. The iron balls tear through decks, splintering the masts and crushing the teeming sailors. A ship like this was called a Man of War, and this new game from Virgin aims to recapture the terror of those days.



This is the main battle map, where you issue your commands before the action phase begins.

It was two hundred years ago that the British sent a fleet of 23 ships to attack a Dutch armada of 25 in an engagement that became known to naval history as the Battle of Camperdown. It's the demo scenario for *Man of War*, the new tactical naval game from Strategy First and Virgin Interactive. What is unique about this game is that it alternates between a first-person point of view and a tactical command screen.

You begin the battle with a doctrine menu. Select how your ships will engage the foe, then advance to the strategy screen. On the brown map depicting your fleet's location, give orders to each individual ship; select targets for them, order them to come about, or have them execute more complex maneuvers. Use the flags in the upper left to issue the commands, and you can give multiple commands to each ship or group of ships.



You can run about freely on the deck in a first-person view that lets you watch as your orders are carried out.

Once that's done, *Man of War* switches to a first-person view; you're standing on the deck of your flagship. This is a non-interactive phase. You can move around the ship with the arrow keys or left-click on a distant ship to view it through your spyglass (right-click to put the spyglass away). The clock can slow things down or speed them up. There's not much you can do to influence the battle from the deck; so just move around and follow the battle from this unique perspective. Soon, you will return to the brown map to issue new orders. The full game contains more scenarios, a campaign, multi-player options, and a scenario editor.

Dark Angel

Win95

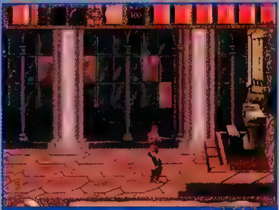
Company: Vicarious Visions
Tech Support: (518) 276-2517
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 3.0 or higher; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 44MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \DADEMO\SETUP.EXE

When the Apocalypse was just a heartbeat away, Carina came, slaughtering all who stood in the way of her quest to stop the growth of chaos and once again restore order to the universe.

You control Carina as she fulfills her destiny, destroying those before her and searching for the embodiment of Chaos himself. This arcade-style game contains all the action you'd expect, plus a few surprises. With 360 degrees of depth (something never before seen in a 2D game) and a story line rich enough to satisfy a roleplaying gamer, this one offers more than just non-stop action.

Controlling Carina is pretty basic — the keyboard directs her movements, while the mouse controls her gun. Move the mouse to aim (you'll move the crosshairs), and press the left mouse button to fire. Press the right mouse button to use a superpower, if you have enough energy for it. For the keyboard commands, see the box here. If Carina doesn't have her gun at the ready, she can perform some truly acrobatic moves.

The demo gives you a single, full level to explore, as well as a single deathmatch arena for as many as eight players. The full version will have 12 deathmatch arenas and 21 single-player levels to battle through.



One way to get to the end of the demo is to find the teleportation coin. Toss it through this hole in the wall, and voila, you're on the other side!

CONTROL KEYS

Move Left	←
Move Right	→
Jump/Climb Up	↑
Action (Enter, Use Lever, etc.)	↓
Flip Left (non-Weapons)	Home
Flip Right (non-Weapons)	Page ↑
Toggle Weapons/Non Weapons	Ins
Cycle Through Weapons	End
Cycle Through Superpowers	page down
Duck	Del
Pause Game	P
Talk to a Character	T
Use Holy Water	H
Select Weapon	1 - 4
Select Superpower	5 - 9
Return to Main Menu	Esc

The Golf Pro

Company: Empire Interactive
Tech Support: (301) 916-9302
Category: Sports
Required: Pentium; 16MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC TWO: \GOLFPRO\GPDINST.EXE

Empire Interactive's *The Golf Pro* isn't like any other sports sim out there. Not only does it let you use the motion of the mouse to control your swing, Empire claims it'll actually improve your real game with practice.

In the full version of the game, you can take to the links as Gary Player himself.

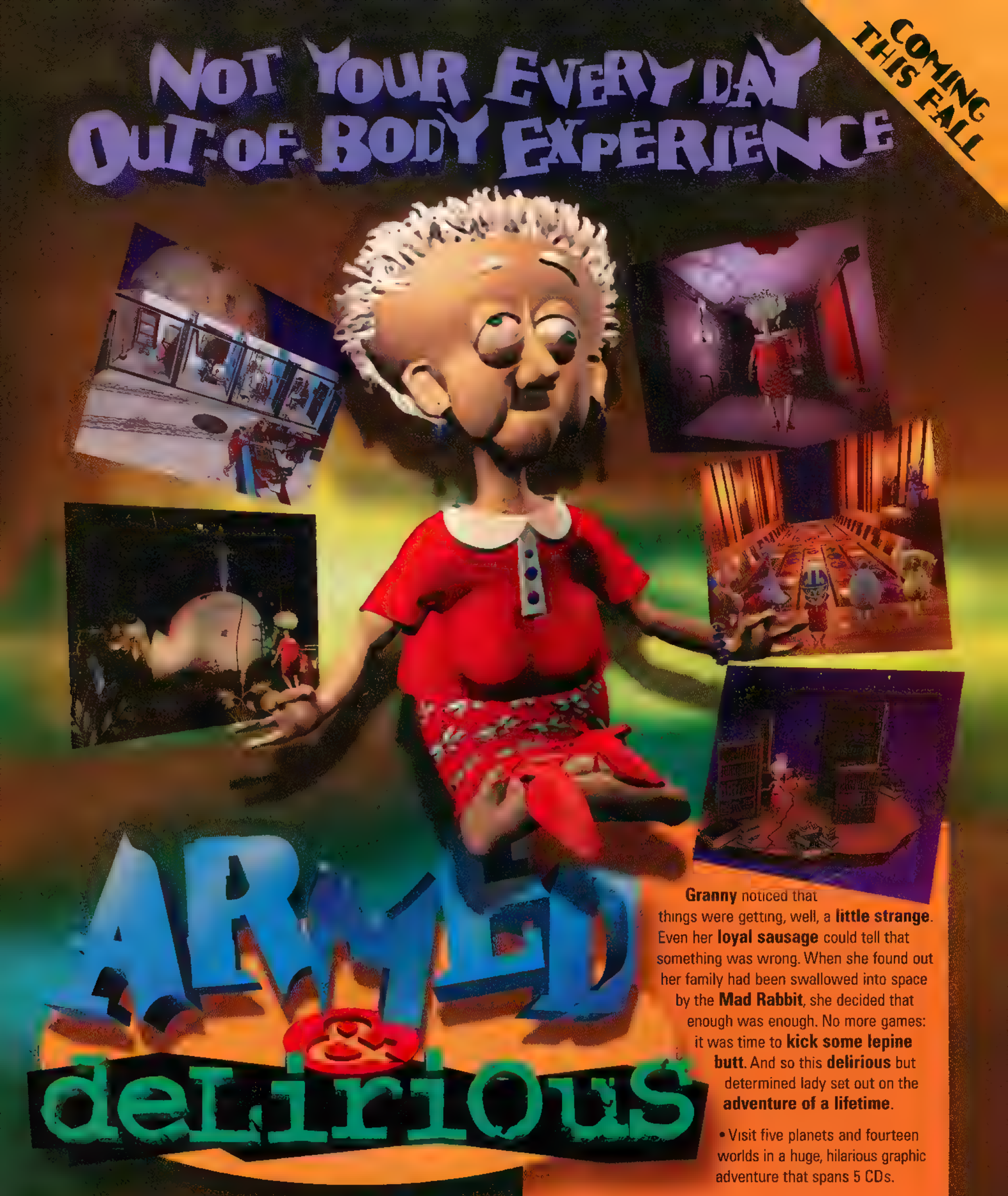
Lots of factors affect how far you hit the ball and where it lands — for instance, you can create different amounts of loft by releasing the mouse button at different points during your swing. If you swing with the mouse turned to one side or the other, you can hook or slice the ball. And naturally, the speed at which you move the mouse on the downswing determines the distance you get.

The demo lets you practice on hole 14 from the St. Mellion Country Club course in England. The full game also includes the Hilton Head National course in South Carolina. The courses were painstakingly recreated, down to mere inches, so you'll really feel like you're there — and if you've played these courses before, you may just recognize the landmarks.

When you start the demo, you can either go into Quick Play mode or click on Practice. If you click on Practice, you'll receive instruction from Gary Player himself, one of the foremost pros in the world. He'll teach you how to use the mouse to swing the club, and cover the basics behind making the best shot possible.

With a simple mouse movement, you can control your spin, direction, loft, hook, slice, and more. So put on your golf shoes, don your plaid pants, and grab hold of that mouse for some pure golf action!

Watch out for those sand traps! Remember, hit the ball hard and low!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Product Information Number 333

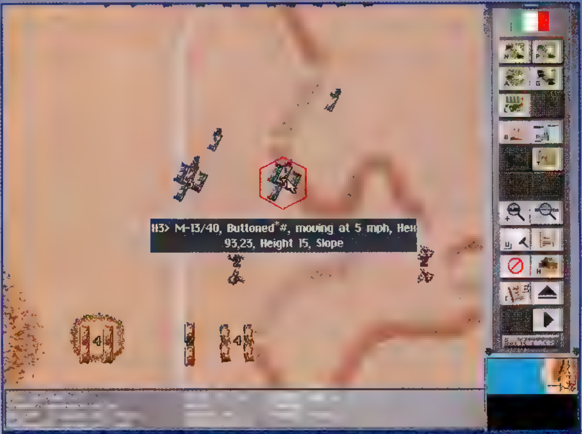
Steel Panthers III

Company: SSI
Tech Support: (408) 737-6850
Category: Wargame
Required: Pentium; 8MB RAM; 46MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \SP3_DEMO\INSTALL.EXE

SSI's Steel Panthers line of wargames is a favorite among grognards and novice wargamers alike. With the latest in the line, the battle continues with even more realistic units, terrain, and strategy.

The demo contains two scenarios — a tutorial that will walk you through the game step by step, and a full combat engagement. It's strongly recommended that you work your way through the tutorial before you get into the meat of the game. The strategy and tactics of the game run deep, so it's best to be prepared before going into full-blown combat.

The full combat engagement is Beda Fomm. Italian troops found themselves surrounded when the British made a major offensive into North Africa, and after two months of disorganized attacks, the trapped Italians were worn down and captured. You can replay this scenario as either the Italians or the British and see if your outcome is different from history.

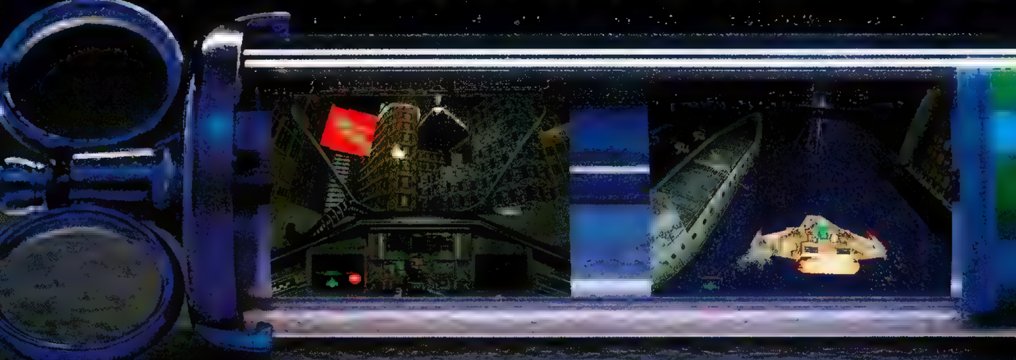


#3> M-13/40, Buttoned*#, moving at 5 mph, Hex 93,23, Height 15, Slope

Think carefully about when and where to move your units — if you leave them out in the open, they'll be sitting ducks.

NOTHING LIKE A GOOD

First, there's the rush. Six degrees worth of it. Coming or going? Who knows. But you're at the center of this suicide mission, and whether you like it or not (you do), you know you've gotta get this rage out of your system, or you may end up in a splatter of self-destruction (not to mention world-wide devastation). With the weapons, raids, assassinations and other assorted chaos-candy of Adrenix thrashing your every molecule, you don't have to descend to get down and dirty. It'll take you in all directions at once. But that's you. All over the place.



7th Legion

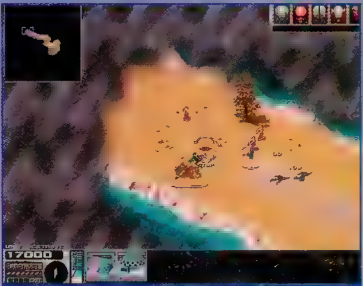
Win95

Company: MicroProse
Tech Support: (510) 522-1164
Category: Strategy
Required: Windows 95; DirectX 5.0; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 34MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: DISC ONE: \7THDEMO\7THSW1.EXE

The market may be flooded with real-time strategy games, but there's always room for one more. *7th Legion* introduces some new gameplay twists that you won't find in other real-time strategy games. For instance, your cash flow is determined by your budget, which in turn is controlled by the government you work for. The amount of money you get depends on your ranking in the game, and your ranking is affected by how many enemy units you've killed. You also get a small amount of cash for each enemy unit destroyed, so it's in your best interests to annihilate any moving thing that's not on your side.

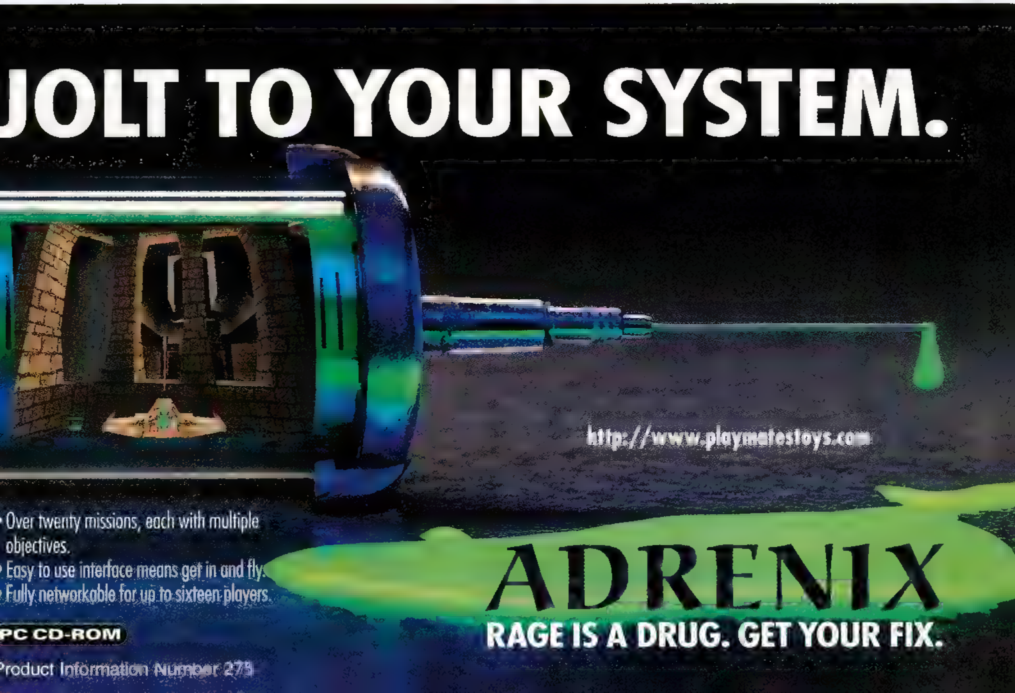
The game also contains Battle Cards, an element that adds wild unpredictability to the game. They range from beneficial to harmful, and you play them by simply dragging the card of your choice from the top, right-hand portion of the screen to the unit you want to use it on. You start off with five cards, and you can only hold five at a time. You will get one more card each time you get your budget allocation.

Beyond that, the game plays like most other real-time strategy games. You can select and move your units with the mouse: left-click the mouse button on an empty piece of terrain to move your selected units. If you move the mouse cursor over an enemy unit, it will turn red, and a left-click will send the selected units in to attack. You'll also notice that if you hold the left mouse button down, you'll see a menu of actions you can perform. Highlight an action and let go of the button to perform it.



When you run into the enemy, make sure you have enough units at your command to hold your own against them.

As in any real-time strategy game, you need to build structures in order to build more units. Once you deploy your base, you can create more buildings from the menu on the bottom of the screen. Click the tab right above the building icon to see what other structures you can build, select one, and click on a spot on the map when the squares turn from red to white. When a building is completed, you can choose from a list of units produced by that building by selecting it from the menu. You won't be able to build all units or buildings in all the missions.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Quake Add-Ons

We received so much response to our special *Quake-O-Rama* CD (October '97) that we talked to the folks at the Stomped web site to bring you the best *Quake* add-ons possible once again.

These files are in compressed form to save space on *The CD*, so you'll need a utility like *PKUnzip* or *WinZip* to unpack them. These utilities are readily available on the Internet (try *www.pkware. com* or *www.winzip.com*, for starters). Follow the directions included with the files.

Many thanks to the folks at Stomped, who've worked so hard to bring you the best the *Quake* community has to offer. Go check out their web site at *www.stomped.com*.

QOOLE

Install: DISC TWO: \QUAKE\QOOLE\WINQOOLE207.ZIP (GLQOOLE207.ZIP for 3Dfx users)
Web site: *www.qoole.com*

QOOLE (pronounced "cool") stands for *Quake Object Oriented Level Editor*. With this editor, you can quickly and easily create and modify *Quake* maps (files that end in .BSP). Extract the files in either WINQOOLE207.ZIP or GLQOOLE207.ZIP (use the sceond one if you have a 3Dfx card and can play *GL Quake*) into their own temporary directory, then run the file SETUP.EXE to install the program. Make sure you read the user's manual (which you can access through the Start-Programs-Qoole menu) to learn how to use the editor. With some practice, your levels might even end up on the *PC Gamer* CD!

Rocket Arena

Install: DISC TWO: \QUAKE\RARENA\RARENA11.ZIP
Web site: *www.planetquake.com/servers/arena*

If you thought Capture the Flag was an addictive add-on for *Quake*, wait until you try out the Rocket Arena! Two players go head-to-head, mano-a-mano, in an all-out attempt to be the king of the hill. If you win, you challenge the next newcomer. If you loose, you go back to the end of the line and wait your turn. Players waiting to challenge the champion can watch the action. Unzip the RARENA11.ZIP file to a new directory under your *Quake* directory (like \QUAKE\ ARENA). Then connect to a Rocket Arena server (try using *GameSpy*, formerly *QuakeSpy*, available at *www. gamespy.com*) to launch — or, if you're connecting to a normal server, start *Quake* with the command "quake -game arena."

Zeus Bot

Install: DISC TWO: \QUAKE\ZEUSBOT\ZEUS205.ZIP
Web site: *207.49.108.199/phase1/nelno*

It's the most sophisticated bot out there. It'll either work your enemies into a bloody pulp, or challenge you with some of the toughest deathmatch action you could imagine. To use it, unzip the ZEUS205.ZIP file into a new directory under your *Quake* directory (like \QUAKE\ZEUS). Then, start *Quake* with the command "quake -game zeus." Consult the ZEUS.TXT file copied to your \QUAKE\ZEUS directory for instructions on how to use the bot. The other file on *The CD*, ZEUS205S.ZIP, is for starting up a server using the Zeus Bot modification for players over the Internet. Read the ZEUS.TXT file for more information.

Quake Done Quicker

Install: DISC TWO: QUAKE\ALL_1635\ALL_1635.ZIP
Web site: *www.planetquake.com/qdq*

So you saw *Quake* completed in less than 20 minutes, and your jaw dropped, right? Well, see if you can handle watching it completed in less than 17 minutes! Yes, that's right: the people who did it fast the first time have managed to shave about three minutes off of their time.

To watch the demo, unzip the file ALL_1635.ZIP into a new directory under your *Quake* directory (like \QUAKE\ALL_1635). Then, when you start *Quake*, use the command "quake -game all_1635" and the demo will start playing. You can skip to other maps by using the "playdemo <levelname>" command from the console, like "playdemo e1m4" to see the fourth map in the first episode of the game. Also included on *The CD* is the file QDQ_1635.ZIP, which is an enhanced theatrical version of the demo — rather than just seeing the action through the first-person view, you can watch it from the best seats in the house. Install it the same way you installed the other demo.

Despairity Deathmatch Pack

Install: DISC TWO: \QUAKE\DESPAIR\ ELMDESPAIRITY.ZIP
Web site: *www.mountdoom.com/quake/ elm/packs/despairity.html*

ELM is a group of level designers who are well known for the quality of their work. In this, their second deathmatch pack, they've created seven all-new levels with unique themes and incredible architecture.

To play the pack, unzip the file ELMDESPAIRITY.ZIP to the \QUAKE\ID1\MAPS directory on your hard drive. Then, when you start the game, you can go to the deathmatch levels by pulling down the console and typing "map <mapname>." For example, if you want to play the ELM deathmatch Map Seven, you'd type "map elmdm07" at the console to load the map. Then continue your deathmatching like normal. Remember — all players in the deathmatch must have the same .BSP files in their \QUAKE\ID1\MAPS directory for the pack to work.

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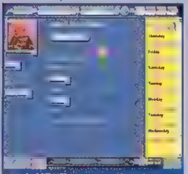
HEAT

Win95

Company: SegaSoft
Tech Support: (888) 262-4[illegible]
Category: Online Service
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 20 hard-drive space; SVGA; 16-bit Internet Connection; Java Enabled Internet Browser (Netscape 3.01+ or Internet Explorer 3.02+)
Install: DISC TWO: \HEAT\KATALYST1_2.EXE

Welcome to HEAT, SegaSoft's new multi-player gaming service. As of press time for this issue, HEAT was in beta test, so if you want to get online and play games with people for free, now's your chance.


With HEAT, you can battle your friends across the country.

All you have to do is install the software, connect to HEAT using a Java-enabled web browser (like Netscape Navigator 3.01 or higher, or Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.02 or higher), and sign on. You can play just about any multi-player PC game on the market, including *Quake*, *WarCraft II*, *Diablo*, *Red Alert*, and *Duke Nukem 3D*.

When the service goes online officially, expect to pay a one-year fee of about $49.95. HEAT says prices aren't locked in yet, though, so it's subject to change, but the free test period should help you decide whether or not it's worth the money.

Since the service is still being tested, you can expect to encounter some bugs. But if you log on and play frequently, you can earn points and win prizes, as well as compete against other HEAT members for special recognition. All you need is Windows 95, a fast computer, and a online service provider that gives you a genuine TCP/IP connection to the Internet — currently, HEAT doesn't support America Online, CompuServe, or Prodigy.

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. You can also go to *http:\\support.imagine-inc.com* or *www.pcgamer.com* for a FAQ.

***The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: PC Gamer Customer Service, The December Disc 3.9 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.**

MindSpring

Tech Support: (800) 719-4660
Category: Online Service
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 14.4Kbps or faster modem
Install: DISC TWO: \MSPRING\SETUP.EXE

MindSpring will launch you onto the Internet with all sorts of goodies at your disposal — you can use E-mail, the World Wide Web, read Usenet newsgroups, and even gain access to free news, stock information, and web support.

The pricing is competitive, too: the Light service gives you 5 hours of service a month for $6.95 and $2 per each additional hour, along with 5MB of web space for your own web page. The Standard plan is $14.95 a month for 20 hours, with each additional hour costing one dollar. You also get 5MB of web space with this one. The Unlimited service gives you unlimited hours for $19.95 a month (without web space), while The Works service gives you unlimited hours, along with two extra E-mail boxes and ten megabytes of web space for $26.95 a month!

MindSpring uses its Pipeline+ software to give Windows 95 users a direct TCP/IP connection to the Internet, using the Microsoft Dial-Up Adapter. That means any of those online games that say they require a TCP/IP connection, like *Quake* or *Ultima Online*, will work beautifully with MindSpring. If you use Windows 3.1, MindSpring uses Connect rather than the Dial-Up Adapter, which gives you a 16-bit TCP/IP connection, so you can still play those online games (as long as they don't require a 32-bit connection). For the online gamer, MindSpring offers all you need to get hooked up and start fragging your friends!

With its realistic pricing and a whole slew of services available, MindSpring is a good jumping-off point for anyone wanting to get onto the Internet. Best of all, if you install the software from *The CD*, the $25 launching fee will be waived. Talk about service!

EarthLink

Tech Support: (800) 395-8410
Category: Online Service
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 9600bps modem
Install: DISC TWO: \EARTHL\14DAY\TA\SETUP.EXE (for 14-day trial)
\EARTHL\3DAY\TA\SETUP.EXE (for 3-day trial)

The EarthLink TotalAccess network supports all kinds of Internet games and utilities — Netscape Navigator, RealAudio, Kesmai games for Windows 95 (including *Air Warrior* and *Casino Poker*), Surf Watch, QuickTime for Windows — anything you could want in an online service provider. We've got two ways for you to connect to EarthLink — a standard three-day trial, and a special two-week trial with a low-rate subscription to *PC Gamer*!

Here's how it works: for the three-day trial, just install the software, and enter all the information it prompts you for, including a credit card number. You can test drive the service for three days; after that, your credit card will be billed for $19.95 a month unless you cancel. That includes full service, and unlimited connect time.

The 14-day trial is a bit different. Subscribe to *PC Gamer* at a special low price, and you'll get two weeks to check out EarthLink. If you've already got a subscription and you take advantage of this offer, you'll get an extra 12 issues added to your account. You can't beat a deal like this!

In either case, if you're not satisfied with how EarthLink works, you can cancel your account with them and your credit card will never be charged. Also, because EarthLink is offering it as a special deal to our readers, they're waiving the $25 setup fee! $19.95 a month gives you unlimited time online and 2MB of space for your own personal web page. And all this can be yours by simply clicking a few buttons. So, what are you waiting for?

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La[illegible] you can try out and purchase full versions of popular software from major retailers. This month, we've got more new titles. Take a look at this list and see if anything strikes your fancy; it's a whole lot easier to try out the software at home then trekking down to your local retailer! To [illegible] Try Before You Buy banner at the main menu of The CD.

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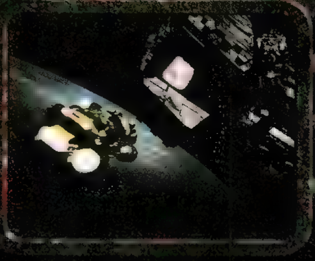
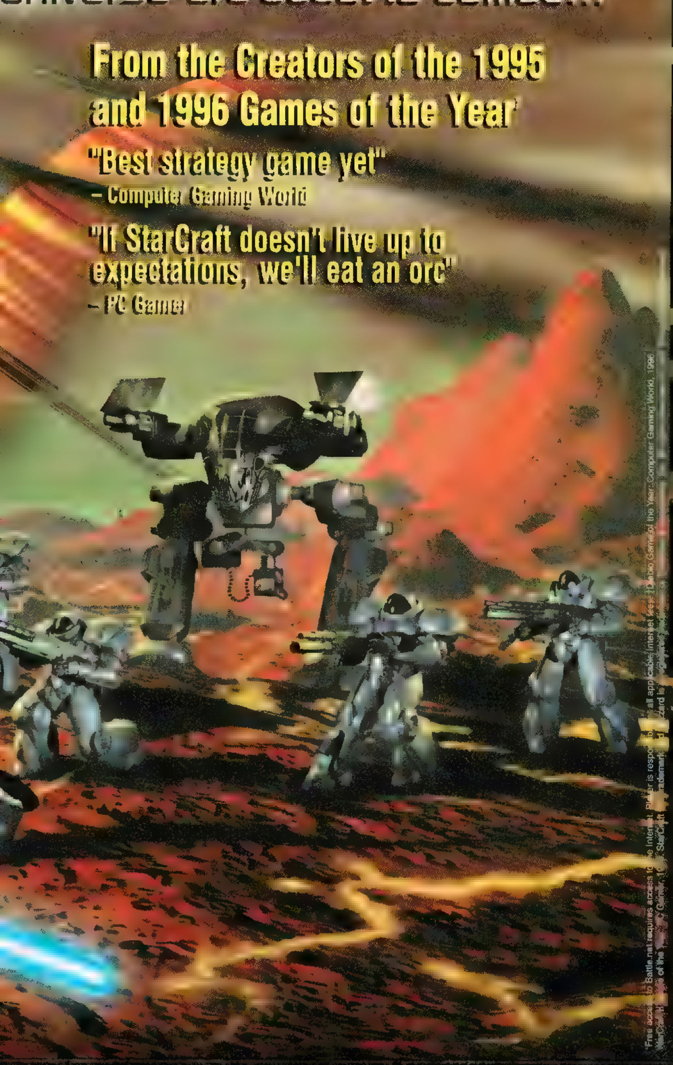


universe are about to collide...



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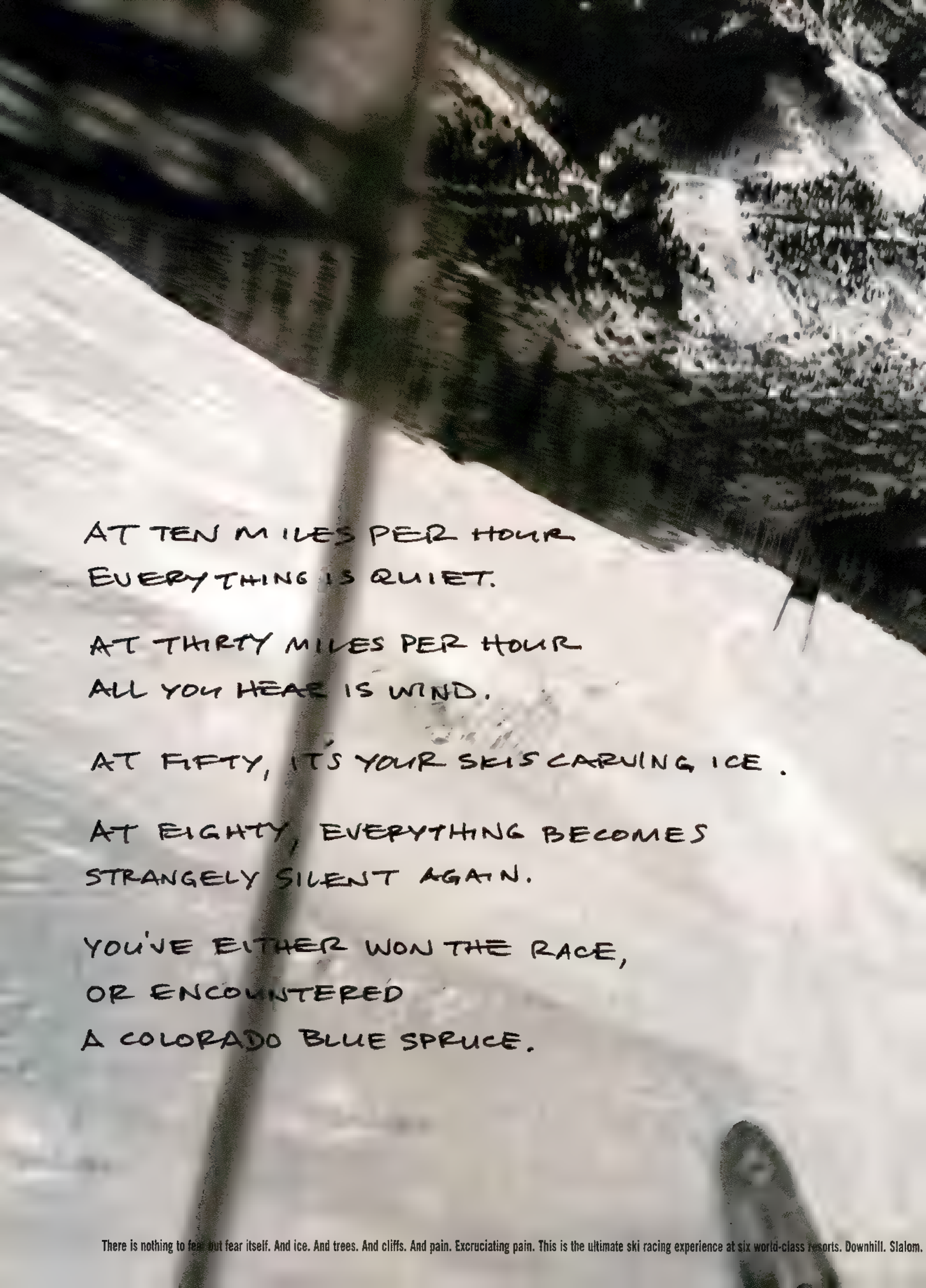
[illegible] of the Year, [illegible] StarCraft [illegible] trademark and Blizzard is [illegible]



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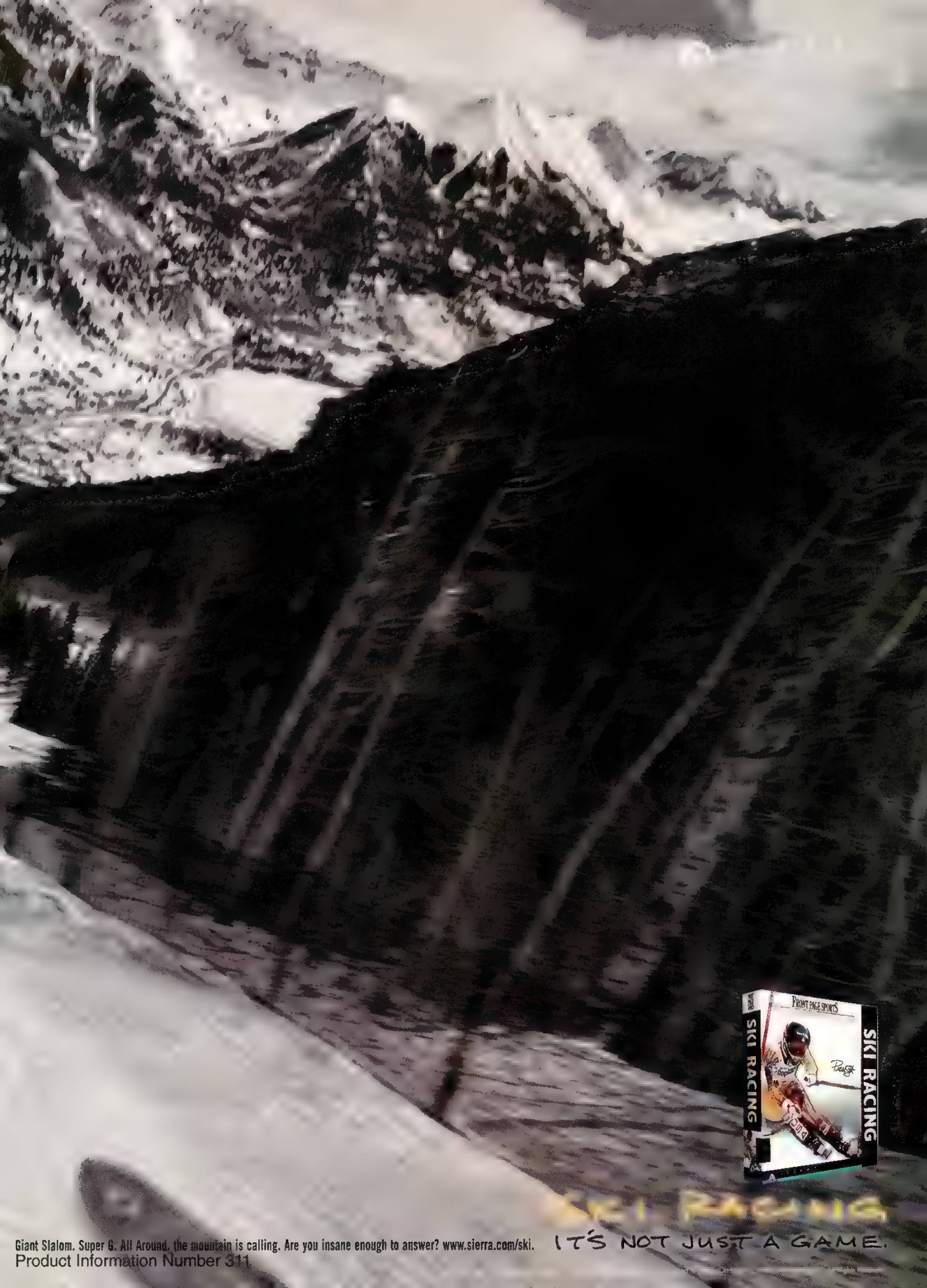
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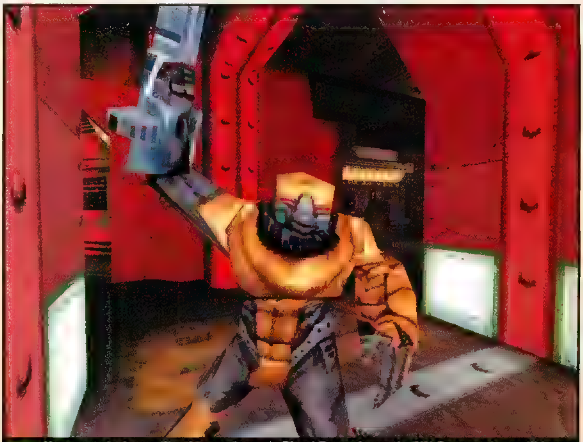
SiN

Ritual goes head-to-head with the Seven Deadlies

From the bad boys who brought you *Scourge of Armagon* comes an innovative new shooter, loaded with the most sugar-sweet level design we've seen in a long time.

—Colin Williamson



Very nasty bad guys like this await you in Ritual Entertainment's *SiN*. Fortunately, you'll have a full array of weapons to waste 'em with.

If the *Quake* engine is the substance, a handful of startup gaming companies have been implementing the style. Valve has the creature-heavy *Half-Life*, ION Storm is presenting the time-hopping *Daikatana*, and Ritual Entertainment (formerly known as Hipnotic Interactive) is creating *SiN*, a game that reinforces Ritual's top-talent reputation.

Just like *Quake II*, *SiN* follows a shocking industry trend of including a plot-line to move along with the game. Players will get to step into the boots of toughened cop John Blade, head of the newly privatized police force. The future is looking pretty dark, as always — the standard dose of drugs and crime are rampant, though a much larger problem is emerging from the voluptuous vixen Alexis Sinclaire, genius bio-engineer and physicist. She's been toying with the fabric of the human race by creating a drug that perfects the human race by erasing all diseases, while putting a halt to the aging process. By attaching the prototype formula to the popular stimulant U4, just about every small-time junkie has become her test subject. But the mutogen isn't exactly perfect, and the majority of human guinea pigs are dying or being changed into something much more frightening. Though Sinclaire's intentions are good, it's up to Blade to put a stop to her manipulative testing.

Making a story that smoothly flows along with the game wasn't an easy task, says Ritual CEO Harry Miller. "What we've learned from our gameplaying is that it's really, really hard — if not impossible — to tell a story in a 3D action game," he says. "It almost ruins the game. But we've found a good way to work around it." So, to keep you updated, you're accompanied by a hacker sidekick named JD, who's connected at all times via video-link. JD can hack into computer systems, introduce you to characters, and brief you on their background. "We want him to tell you the story as you go along," says Miller. "In turn, it's a very rich and vivid experience. Coupled with the story, the visuals, and the action, it will be a very well-rounded game."

SiN's gameplay will be geared

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: SiN
Category: Shooter
Developer: Ritual Entertainment
Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., #1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200
Projected Price: $50
Percentage Complete: 70%

In a nutshell:

SiN is a first-person 3D shooter with technology roots in the *Quake II* engine.

What's so special?

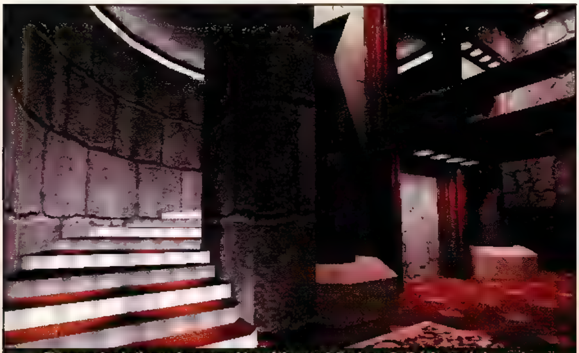
SiN offers a continuous, flowing story through more than 20 stunning, A-Grade levels of gameplay, with an obvious emphasis on single-player action.

Why should I care?

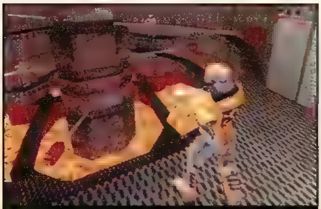
Ritual Entertainment is one of the industry's newest startup companies, and made its mark with the *Scourge of Armagon* add-on for *Quake*. The staff consists of an all-star lineup, and the level-designers are veteran aces.

And when's it coming out?

Early part of 1998



This mansion hallway gives some idea of the exquisite dynamic lighting techniques that are being used to pump up *SiN*'s moody and realistic atmosphere.



Robot sentries keep watch around a rather nasty looking contraption afloat in a pool of lava. We're guessing you don't want to fall in.

more towards the single-player, and multiple paths will be included to boost the replayability. "*SiN* has action-based outcomes," says Miller. "It creates a spider-web through the game. Though everyone has the same ending, there are several different paths to get there. We can allow you to play the game ten times and things will have changed. These changes you'll run into aren't necessarily harder or easier, just something dramatically different.

"What makes *SiN* different is the fact that it's a mission-based game," Miller says. "We're creating six chapters in a book, each one being individual in its own sense, but as a collective, building towards the end." And to make the chapters flow to resemble a believable world, the real star of *SiN* has to be the levels. The all-star mapping team includes veteran *Duke Nukem 3D* designer Richard "Levelord" Gray, *Quake* map master Mike "Giggler" Wardwell, and *Doom* level veteran Tom "Paradox" Mustaine. In total, there will be six missions, with each mission containing between two and eight levels.

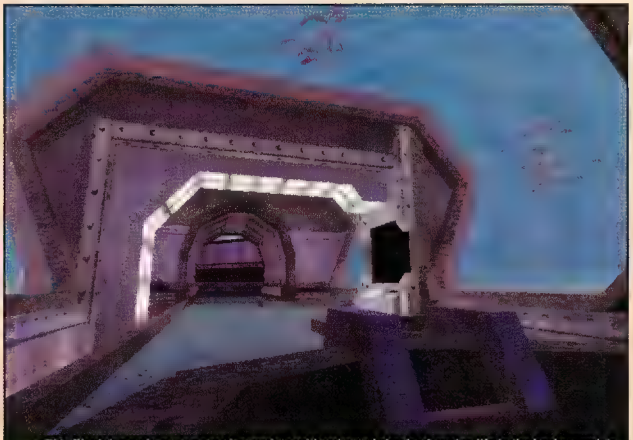
The amount of interaction that the player has with the maps is beyond anything you've seen with the *Quake* engine. One of the best examples is in the second level during a high-speed chase through a condemned building in pursuit of arms-packing bank robbers. As they shoot back at you, a section of the ceiling collapses and blocks off your path with rubble — so you have to head down to the basement, and blow out a wooden support to bring the floor down. And as you run through the level, you'll have to be on the lookout for collapsing staircases and creaking floorboards. A lot of the interactive elements of the map don't have much effect on gameplay, but add to the suspension of disbelief. "*SiN* is just jam-packed full of that kinda stuff," says Miller. "No one will ever have made a game as great as ours, in that we have so many interactive elements in the game, just as eye-candy. Anything you think should be able to work, does."

> "No one will ever have made a game as great as ours."
>
> — HARRY MILLER, CEO, RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT

The second of the two levels Ritual currently has up and running is Sinclaire's mansion, a house with architecture by Inspector Gadget and decor by Stanley Kubrick. Among the suggestive paintings and phallic sculpture is a security system from hell; laser tripwires result in turrets lowering from the ceiling and capping you full of laser fire, and security tanks pop up from holes in the floor. Trying to get inside the mansion without becoming hamburger is a prime example of where JD can help you out — if you listen to his advice, you may be able to find the mansion's secret back door, and shut down the security system.

One of *SiN*'s unusual features is the ability to access the Internet while playing the game. If you're stuck on a level, you may be able to jump on to a nearby computer terminal, and access the *actual* Internet to grab clues. "If you're a puzzle lover you'll have a really good time," says Miller. "There are a lot of areas where thinking really helps in the game." For example, attention to detail will come in to play in the construction site level, where you'll discover a map of the level lying out on a table for your perusal.

Though *SiN* is driven by the *Quake* engine, it doesn't share the same dark palette of greys and browns. Support



This Plexiglas underwater tunnel, complete with animated shoals of marine life in the background, is one of the more imaginative environments that Ritual is building for inclusion in *SiN*.

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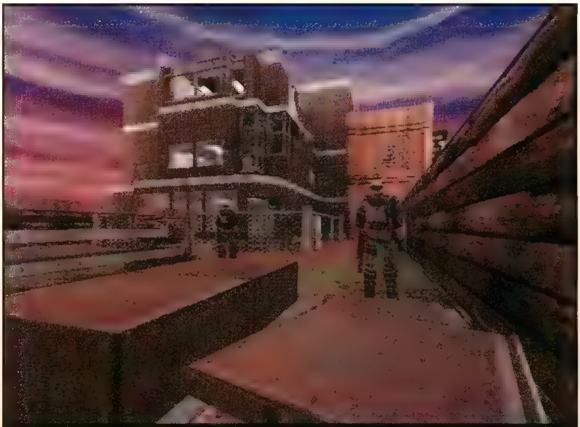

Outdoor areas are all the rage in the post-*Quake* 3D shooting world these days, and *SiN* serves 'em up in spades, complete with attractive sky textures.

for 16-bit colored textures has been added (accessible through software and OpenGL hardware), and *Quake II*-style colored lighting effects will add subtle touches. "We've taken all of the advantages of the *Quake* engine, and tweaked it to create the ultimate game," says Mark Dochtermann. "You'll never see a level that looks anything like another. And you'll never get lost, since you'll be able to recognize that you've been in a distinct area."

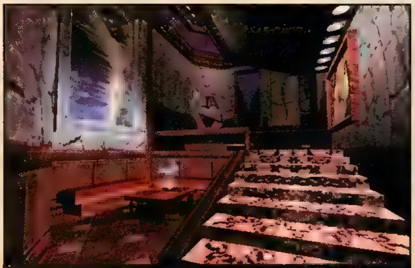
Brush masking and translucency effects have been tossed in to the mix, resulting in shattering translucent glass, and see-through chain-link fences. With a nod to *Shadow Warrior*, you can drive cranes, jeeps and other vehicles, and climb ladders. Surprisingly, most of the enhancements such as colored light and rotating objects have been coded in-house by Ritual themselves — but after *Quake II* is released, Ritual will be permitted to borrow any *QII* code they wish to implement.

With all the emphasis on single-player action, one might think that DeathMatching may be overlooked. Not so — *SiN* multi-player games will let you play as three of the game's different characters and will contain ten huge DeathMatch maps. A *QuakeWorld*-type system called *SiNWorld* will be included, too. "There will be new modes of play that have never be seen before," says Miller. "but we have to play this very close to the vest." And just like *Quake II*, *SiN* will include a dynamic .DLL system that allows ambitious gamers to create their own single and multi-player add-ons. "It's very expandable," says Miller. "The end user can do things above and beyond what it's doing right now."

As for the weapons, there's nothing to report yet. "No weapon will be finalized until just before the game ships," Miller says. "Until we've played the game extensively, we won't know for certain which weapons fit in the game — a lot of it depends on the balancing and the attributes of other weapons."

At this point, *SiN* is progressing smoothly, and the first-quarter 98 release sounds definite. Miller says that the last three months of the project will be devoted to tweaking, breaking, and fixing the game. Until then, sit back and get ready — if *SiN* turns out to be as good as it sounds, we're all going to be doing a lot of repenting...

PCG


Here's another example of the amazing detail that Ritual's designers are putting into *SiN*'s 3D environments — note the patterns on the carpet and the works of art on the walls.

"IT'S A HIT"

- CBS News/48 Hours

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9 out of 10
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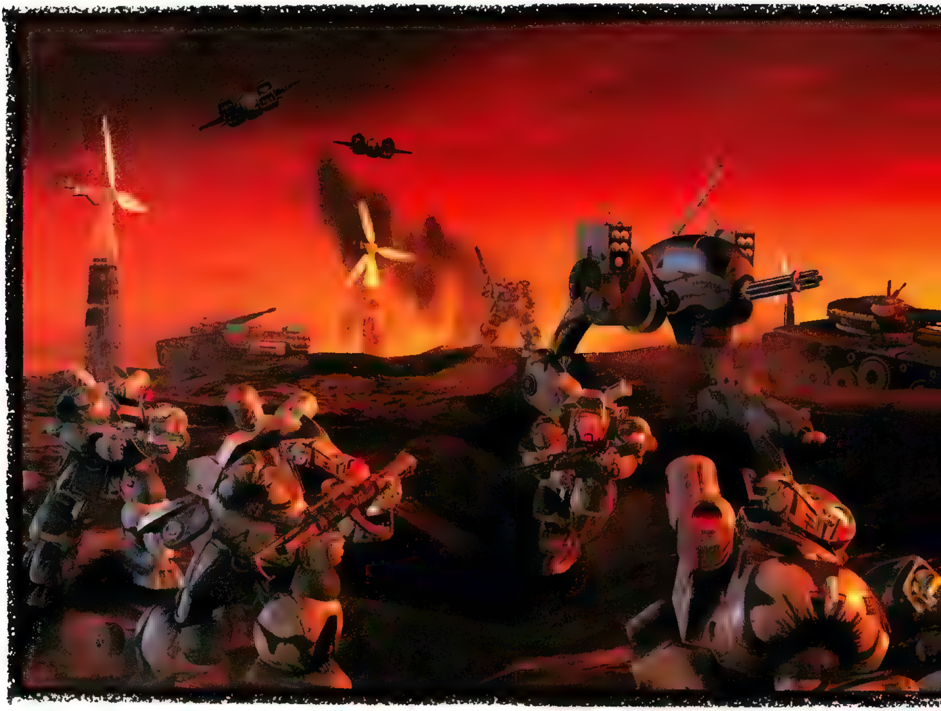

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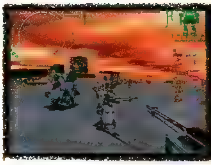

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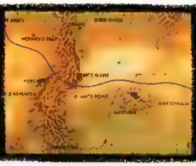

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Product Information Number 84

Star Wars: Rebellion

You want this ... don't you?

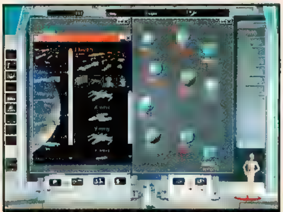
Here's your chance to rule the Star Wars universe with LucasArts' long-awaited game of planetary domination and galactic conquest.

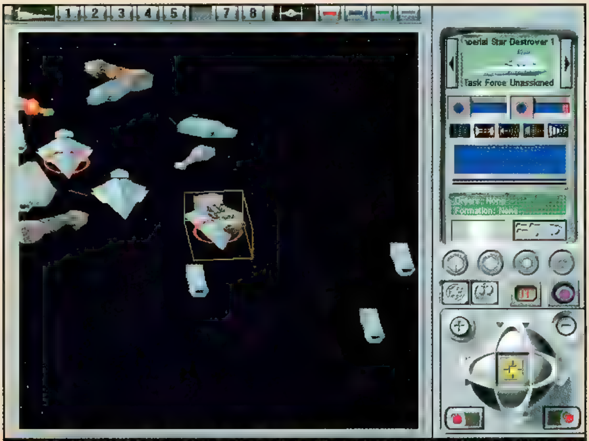
— Gary Whitta

When *WarCraft* and *Command & Conquer* created a new kind of strategy game, and rocked the PC gaming charts in the process, we all predicted a wave of bandwagon-jumping real-time strategy games intending to leech off their success. But we didn't expect quite so many as are now arriving, and it's already getting tiresome. Thank heavens, then, for LucasArts, who decided to take the road less travelled with its entry into the real-time strategy market, *Star Wars: Rebellion*. It would have been easy for LucasArts to produce a quick cash-in, a *C&C* knock-off with AT-AT walkers, speeder bikes, and snowspeeders replacing the traditional units, but the company had grander plans than that. In fact, *Rebellion's* competition is not *C&C* or *WarCraft* at all, but the smaller, deeper sub-genre of games dealing with epic galactic conquest.

"There has been a large explosion of real-time games, but they tend to break down into two categories — squad level tactical games and strategic world or galactic domination games," says LucasArts' *Rebellion* production manager Wayne Cline. "We fit into the latter category — we see games like *Pax Imperia 2* and *Master of Orion II* as our competitors."

This approach is due in no small part to the background of the game's


Players can design their own fleets and send them to secure vital star systems.



The 3D tactical battle engine is where ship-to-ship combat takes place. Recent modifications to the design give players greater control over the ships and squadrons under their command.

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Star Wars: Rebellion
Category: Strategy
Developer: Coolhand Interactive
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94192 (800) 782-7927
Projected Price: TBA
Percentage Complete: 90%

In a nutshell:

Take command of Rebel or Imperial forces in a bitter struggle for supremacy in a galaxy far, far away. *Rebellion* mixes galactic strategy on a grand scale with real-time tactical engagements reminiscent of the movies' dramatic space battles.

What's so special?

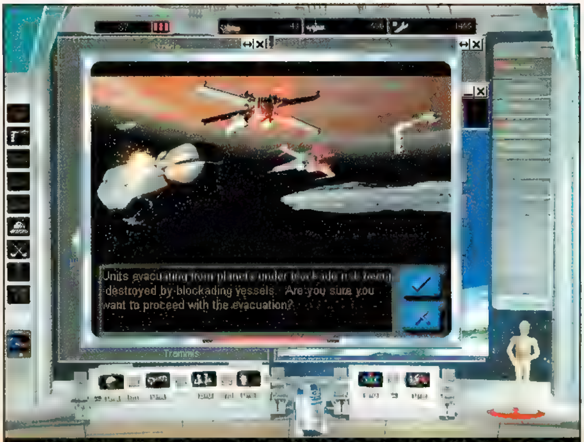
Combining large-scale strategy with squadron-level battle tactics is a bold move rarely seen in this genre, and if Coolhand Interactive pulls it off, it could result in the birth of a new strategic sub-genre.

Why should I care?

LucasArts rarely drops the ball when dealing with its most prestigious license, and this is one genre that gamers have been wanting to see adapted for the Star Wars universe for a long time.

And when's it coming out?

Early part of 1998



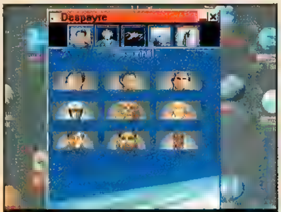
Units evacuating from planets under blockade risk being destroyed by blockading vessels. Are you sure you want to proceed with the evacuation?

Commanders will often have to make crucial decisions, such as during this attempted evacuation of a Rebel base that has been blockaded by Imperial forces.

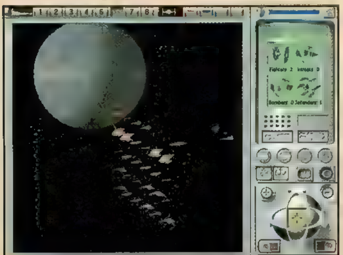
developer, Coolhand Interactive; many of the team members cut their teeth working on grand-scale strategy games like *Harpoon II* and the V for Victory series. Now they're bringing this experience to bear on *Rebellion*, which gives players the chance to assume overall command of either the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire as the two old enemies fight it out for control of the galaxy. The fundamental basis of the game will be familiar to many who've played in this genre before, dealing with resource management, expansion, exploration, and diplomacy, but Cline says that *Rebellion* will play very differently depending on which side you command. "Playing as the Rebel Alliance, the player will need to use more diplomacy and capture tactics to accomplish goals," he says. "But as the Galactic Empire, you'll have to adopt a more heavy-handed approach by using force and assassinations, and other more sinister methods. This is obvious even from key victory goals, where the Alliance must capture Coruscant while the Empire must destroy the Rebel headquarters."

Rebellion has evolved a lot since it was first revealed to the press earlier in the year — the result of a recent LucasArts' "pizza orgy," an informal meeting in which the developers let go their conscious selves, and act on instinct. Actually, what they do is get together and share ideas mid-project to assess how the game's going and how the design might be improved. "A lot of great comments and ideas came out of the orgy, and we've been trying to incorporate as many as we can that make sense," says Cline. "There've been quite a few changes, as through testing, we've been seeing what works and what doesn't and trying to adjust the design to fit."

One of the areas that's seen the most change is the tactical engine, a separate game module that comes into play whenever opposing spacefleets meet and engage in battle. In these large-scale battles, players view and command the action through a rotatable viewer which gives a three-dimensional view of the combat. "We have revamped the tactical engine to try to allow the player to control ships more directly, says Cline. "A couple of months ago, you basically assigned each ship a target and then watched as the ships stood toe-to-toe firing at each other— most firepower wins. Now we're allowing players to maneuver individual ships, use tractor beams, ion cannons, and stand-off capabilities to bring more thought into how to fight a battle. It has become a more important part to the game, but we are still allowing players who don't want to fight every battle to have the computer figure the outcome.



See any familiar faces? *Rebellion* has lots of Star Wars cameo appearances.



A rebel fleet comes under fire from the Death Star's primary weapon as they lay siege to the station.

"The tactical battles still remain primarily a capital ship engagement," Cline continues. "Fighters do take part, but they act as squadrons, not individually. Each capital ship a player brings to the battle will be shown, and the player can form them into task forces to act as a unit. If the capital ship has a fighter squadron on board, it will launch, and the fighters will contribute to the mayhem. Orders can be as specific as clicking on your ship and then at a target, or as broad as clicking on your ship, then on a way point, then on a target where it will engage to disable at stand-off range. By allowing the choice to have the computer abstract battles at any time, either before or during the conflict, a player doesn't need to become an expert at the tactical game, but it could help to turn a battle they might otherwise lose into a victory."

One aspect that has remained largely unchanged in recent months is the character-based aspect that sees some of the trilogy's most famous faces — Luke, Han, Darth, Leia, etc. — available for you to command and send on special assignments. "The character-based missions allow us to bring a sort of roleplaying aspect to the game," says Cline. "Using the characters, the player can affect how a mission might turn out based on the attributes the character may have. For example, you can initiate a Diplomacy mission to convince a planet to join the Alliance. That mission has a certain probability of succeeding or failing, but by adding Mon Mothma, who has a high Diplomacy rating, to the mission, you increase the odds of the mission succeeding. At the same time, though, you're exposing one of the key characters that must be protected from capture."

Multi-player options for *Rebellion* will be limited to two players because of the two-sided nature of the Star Wars conflict, but there will be plenty of ways to play, over modem, LAN and on the Internet either through a direct TCP/IP connection, or through Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone, which currently has the exclusive rights to all LucasArts' games online.

If all goes well, Star Wars-loving strategy fans should be able to play their dream game within a few months. "The game is shaping up very well and we are about a month away from beta-test," says Cline. "All the design issues are figured out and for the rest of the way, we're concentrating on game balancing and hammering on the AI to make sure it acts and reacts as logically as possible."

Now let's blow this thing and go home... **PCG**

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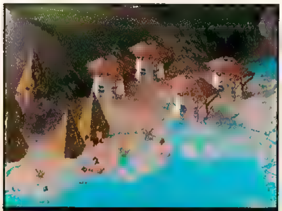
Product Information Number 144

Populous: The Third

The third generation of "God-games" is almost here

How do you improve on perfection? Eight years after the the first *Populous*, Bullfrog thinks it has the answer in its first game without Peter Molyneux.

— Chris Charla



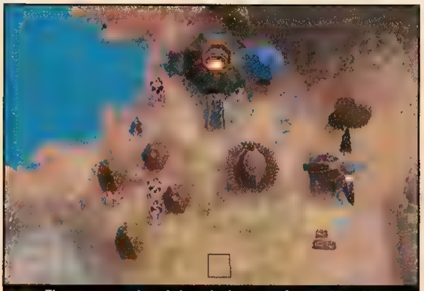
Note the variety in ground appearance enabled by color-ramping.

Trying to improve on *Populous* is a bit like trying to come up with an upgrade to chess. When the original was released eight years ago, not only was it the first "God game," but, along with *SimCity*, it helped establish the interface and look that dominates strategy games to this day. In case you're new to the PC game world, here's a quick recap of the original: You played a god, who needed to attract followers, shape their environment (gods, of course, have the ability to alter the earth) to help them prosper and, after collecting enough "god power" (manna) from their worshippers, destroy other gods (by wrecking those gods' followers' temples, settlements, etc.) to establish complete dominance over the world. The game, played in a forced-perspective isometric view, was as noted for its simplicity in control and execution as it was for its incredible originality depth.

To many, the game simply couldn't be improved — *Populous II* wasn't much more than a graphical update — and maybe that's why it's taken Bullfrog so long to ready a sequel.

"When we sat down to design *The Third Coming*, we knew the original *Populous* was a hard act to follow," says Alan Wright, project leader at Bullfrog. "The way we started was by identifying what we saw as the essential elements and fundamental features in *Populous*, and incorporating them into *The Third Coming*. So the player still plays a god, and the objective is the same — defeat opposing gods. We have made every effort to keep the simplicity of the original. You build up your population, and when you're powerful enough, you go in to defeat the opposition. We basically felt that *Populous* was brilliant in its simplicity, and we have made every effort to continue that simplicity in *The Third Coming*.

"Still," he says, "it has been eight years since the original game came out, and the industry has changed greatly in that time. Strategy games have come a long way, too." The biggest change, of course, is in graphics. Unlike the original's 2D isometric mode, *The Third Coming* will be in fully rotatable 3D. The engine is actually powerful enough to support first-person views through the eyes of followers, but Wright expects this view to only come into play for real-time cut scenes. All the game's control will be from a fairly standard looking overhead perspective, although gamers will be able to zoom out far enough to see half of the game world at once, and be able to play from that view if they wish.



There are a number of views in the game. Standard is a 3/4 view, but you can play from directly overhead if you prefer.

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Populous: The Third Coming
Developer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd. San Mateo, CA 94401 (415) 571-7171
Projected Price: TBA
Percentage Complete: 85%

In a nutshell:

Populous: The Third Coming is the follow-up to Peter Molyneux's ground-breaking "God game" and its sequel. You're an all-powerful god, who needs to gain followers, make them prosper, and smite rival gods.

What's so special?

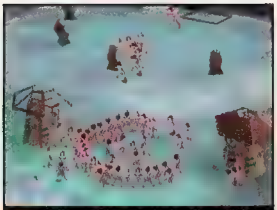
Populous was arguably the game that created the real-time strategy genre way back in 1989; this update should throw down the gauntlet for the next generation of God games.

Why should I care?

First, the simplicity of control should be a relief after a year of increasingly complex real-time strategy games. Second, Bullfrog has pulled out all stops to ensure that its first post-Molyneux release is a hit.

And when's it coming out?

First Quarter 1998

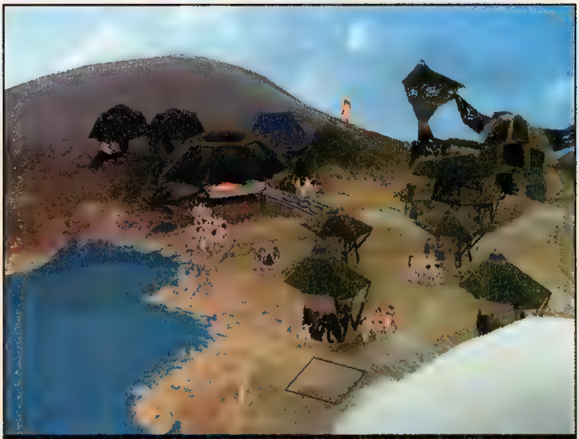


Follower AI is simple, but they exhibit a number of interesting behaviors.

The engine itself is impressive. Instead of creating the world with basic tile sets, or even standard texture maps, each level is a massive 4MB bitmap, created with a "color ramp" that changes a pixel's color based on its altitude. The color ramp, combined with a bump map that adds highlights and shading, enables level designers to create worlds quickly and ensures that those worlds don't have the cookie-cutter look that has plagued so many real-time strategy games. Atop that backdrop are 3D buildings and trees, although the characters remain sprites. The bitmapped nature of the terrain will also enable terrain deformations caused by spells and character actions. There are no plans for 3D acceleration at this time, but that may change by the time the game is released.

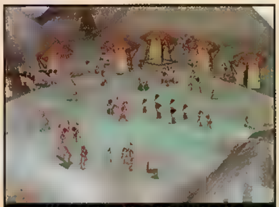
"The change to a 3D environment greatly changes the feel of the game," says Wright. Another major change is the amount of control you'll have over individual characters, he says. "Whereas in *Populous I* and *II* you didn't control them directly, you just had influence over the leader, in *The Third Coming* you can influence individuals in the population," he says. "If you don't command them at all, they will go about their business, building stuff, etc., but if you want to direct them in a specific geographic direction, or to build a specific type of building, you can intervene and command them to do it."

Specific types of buildings? That's another change. Unlike the original, which had only one building type that evolved as your following grew, there are now multiple building types, as well as multiple character types, and, in a real nod to real-time strategy games a resource, wood, to manage. "We have introduced a number of building types and character types," says Wright, "but wanted it to be very simple, very easy to pick up, so there aren't hundreds of different units, just a few." Wright expects the easy learning curve to enable people turned off by the likes of *WarCraft II* and *C&C* to easily pick up the game, but he maintains that there will be enough depth for anyone. "The controls are very simple, but you can use them together to do some very complex things," he says.



The game world is a sphere, and you can rotate the world along any axis. When you zoom out enough, you can first see a curved horizon, and eventually an entire hemisphere.

Another major change is that where the original game featured open-ended levels, *The Third Coming*'s single-player game will feature a 30-level, mission-based path to completion. Character AI is simple but effective, and the AI of enemy gods should exceed the difficulty of the original. If you're more interested in testing yourself against other humans, don't worry; multi-player capabilities will be present. Bullfrog currently is planning to include support for four-player LAN games and some level of Internet play.



Want a nice village? Better level some ground to build it on.

In short, with *Third Third Coming*, Bullfrog is attempting to do what every good game sequel does — keep what worked in the original, update it with the latest technology, and improve wherever possible. The release has a little more importance than a standard sequel though, since it will be the first game from Bullfrog since the departure of Peter Molyneux, who founded the company and created the original *Populous*. How does it feel to be continuing the legacy of *Populous* without the input of the game's founding father? Wright is frank in his reply: "In reality, although Peter is credited with the complete design of the game, in actual fact he was just a team member," he says. "He and a few others actually did the game, not just him. Having said that, Peter obviously has a great talent and we of course recognize that. This being the first release since his departure, it does create some pressure." But, he concludes, "we're really more focused on making a great game, rather than proving anything." Sounds good to us.

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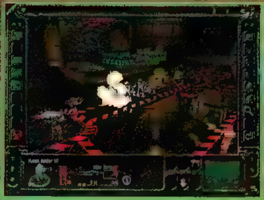

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Product Information Number 177

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C&C: Sole Survivor

Westwood's real-time universe explodes into action!

If you thought the action in *Command & Conquer* was frantic, get ready to change your definition of the word. The world of C&C is hitting the Internet in a big way.

— Joel Durham

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor
Developer: Westwood Studios
Publisher: Virgin, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (800) 874-4607
Projected Price: Around $29.99
Percentage Complete: 90%

In a nutshell:

In *Sole Survivor*, you control a single unit in an online action game set in the Command & Conquer universe. Navigate the map in a search for crates containing unit-enhancing power-ups, and battle other units in an effort to be the…sole survivor.

What's so special?

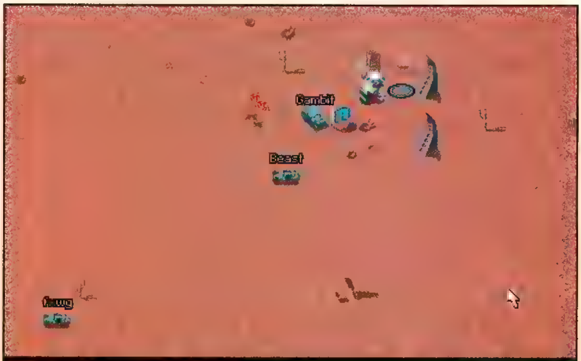
Command & Conquer and its successor *Red Alert* are two of the greatest real-time strategy games ever. *Sole Survivor* will support as many as 50 players on a single map. Imagine the frantic combat of *C&C* without the micromanagement to worry about.

Why should I care?

Big arena online games are becoming a major trend in the gaming industry, and *Sole Survivor* brings C&C into that genre. Fans of *C&C, Red Alert,* or online multi-player gaming will find plenty to like here.

And when's it coming out?

Early December 1997



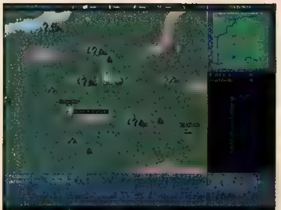
Desert Action: Since *Sole Survivor* uses the *C&C Gold* engine, you'll see the different terrain types featured in the single-player game.

Some time ago, Westwood Studios made a big splash in the happy little pond of computer gaming with the smash hit *Command & Conquer*, a game that will be remembered forever as one of the defining monuments of the booming real-time strategy genre. Ever since then, the C&C universe has grown through the release of add-on packs, new versions, and, of course, the mega-hit "prequel," *Red Alert*.

The major strength of the *C&C* games, and one of the primary reasons for their success, is the multi-player support: while the single-player campaigns are fun and engaging, nothing compares to destroying a dear friend's construction yard over a network or the Internet.

Westwood hasn't failed to recognize the growing popularity of its titles online, or the recent proliferation of Internet-only multi-player games like *Ultima Online* and *Warbirds*. *Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor* is Westwood's attempt to take *C&C* into the dedicated online gaming realm.

Here's the first bit of good news: in stark contrast to many other online games, players will not be required to pay a fee to play. "Westwood's going to have several servers that you can join through Westwood Chat, and that will be free," says Steve Wetherill, Vice President of Research and Development for Westwood Studios. "We're also putting a server in the box, so end users can run their own servers. That's an important differentiation between our product and other ones that are out there. We're also talking to the other online companies like TEN, Mpath, and so on because we want to get maximum exposure."

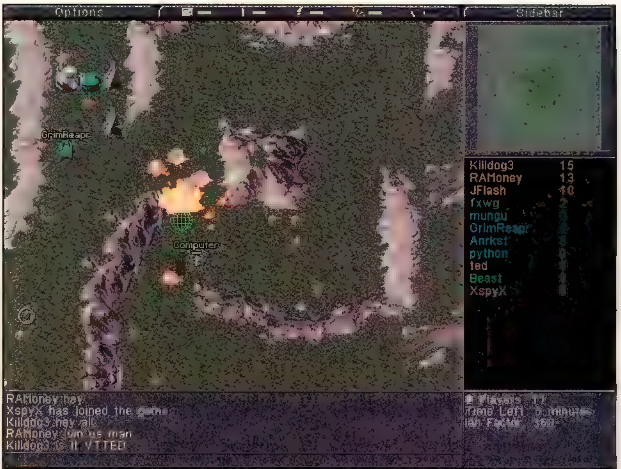


This is the blue team's encampment in a Capture the Flag battle.

The world of *Sole Survivor* will be instantly recognizable to anyone who has experienced *C&C* or *Red Alert*. The online game uses the same basic engine, graphics, and interface as the recently reissued

GrimReapr
Computer

You'll be able to play *Sole Survivor* for free on Westwood Chat.



RAMoney: hey
XspyX has joined the game
Killdog3: hey all
RAMoney: join us man
Killdog3: is it VTTED

As many as 50 gamers can play *Sole Survivor* at one time. You can set a time limit for your game if you choose, or you can play on a server that has unlimited play time.

Windows 95 version of *C&C*. "It's high res and uses large maps — in fact, the largest maps the engine can handle," says Ken Murphy, *Sole Survivor* producer. The similarity ends there, however; this is a whole different kind of game from the real-time strategy *C&C* fans are familiar with.

In *Sole Survivor*, players take command of a single unit on a battlefield populated with as many as 49 other human-controlled units. "It's more arcade than traditional *Command & Conquer*, it's faster paced, it's faster action," says Murphy. "You don't do any building or unit production, but what you do have is unit attributes. For example, you always knew that a mammoth tank was slow and armored in *C&C*, but you never knew *how* slow or how armored. Well now, we reveal that to you."

The individual units' attributes can be upgraded through power-ups. "We have five power-ups right now," Murphy says. "Weapons power-up, health power-up, speed, range, and rapid reload."

With such strong emphasis on power-ups, a major part of *Sole Survivor's* gameplay consists of scrambling about the map and picking up the crates which contain them. "The map is usually peppered with all kinds of crates," says Murphy. "Some of them are booby-trapped. If you get too powered-up and try to get greedy, we kind of put you back in your place. It's a big game balancer."

> "It's more arcade than traditional *Command & Conquer*, it's faster paced, it's faster action."
>
> — Ken Murphy, *Sole Survivor* producer

The overall goal of any given game depends upon who set it up. There is a free-for-all mode, in which the goal is to eliminate all of the other players to become, well, the sole survivor. "Some people like playing that," says Murphy, "but we've found in our beta test that the most popular game is Capture the Flag, where people have to act as a team. So they have to coordinate their attack, they have to coordinate their defense...it's like semi-gameplay and semi-social. It's 50-50; it's really fun."

But servers certainly aren't limited to those two modes of play. In fact, Westwood is concentrating on making *Sole Survivor* extremely customizable. "We are making the server almost completely configurable," says Murphy, "so if you want to have an infantry-only game, a dinosaurs-only game (yes, Westwood is including the dinosaurs in *Sole Survivor*), if you want to have armored units only, sure you can configure that. It's just a couple of clicks in a window."

Other elements will also be customizable. Servers can have time limits; when the clock runs out, a winner is declared. While this is an optional element, Murphy says that they've "found that the beta testers like a winner. They like a conclusion," he says. "We do have one server up that's just unlimited time, and that's always fun because people can go in and practice and gather points and leave whenever they want, but people like to know, hey, did my team win? And by how much? It also sets us up later for ladders if we should implement them." A ladder is a ranking system for a widely-played game; the outcome of matches between ranked players determines their position on the ladder. "People like to see their name in lights," says Murphy.

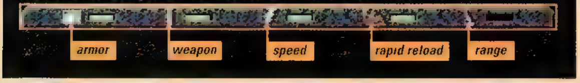
You'll notice that the crate concentration is far higher than in *C&C*.

Response from the 1,500 to 2,000 members of the closed beta test has been "very good, actually," says Wetherill. "Yeah, people are liking it and understand it," he says. "It seems like we've met their expectations. They're expecting no more, no less. They just think it's fun." You'll be able to decide for yourself next month when *Sole Survivor* hits the retail shelves. But remember — only online gamers need apply...

PCG

The Status Bar

The attributes for your unit are shown in the form of status bars.



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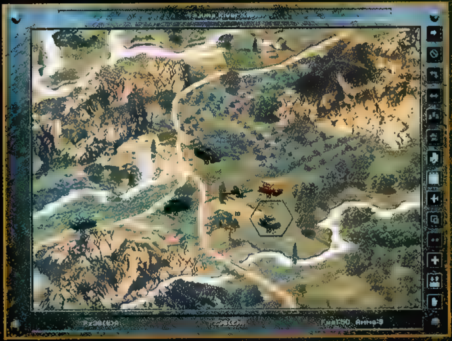

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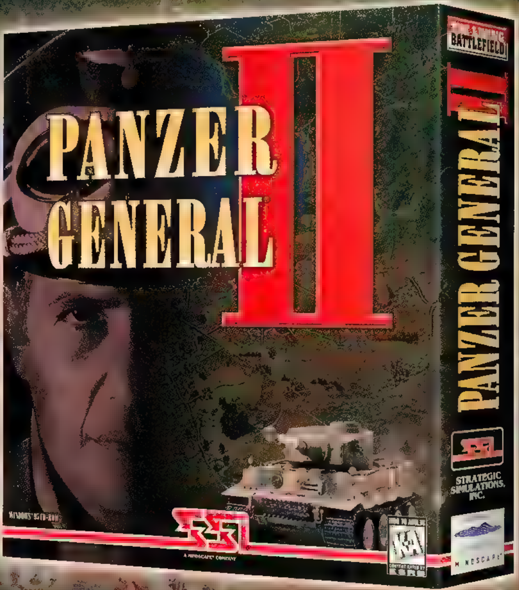
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Product Information Number 330

Resistance is Futile

GT Interactive to Assimilate MicroProse

In an alarmingly clear example of corporate Darwinism (i.e., Survival of the Richest), GT Interactive is set to acquire MicroProse in a $250,000,000 stock-swap deal. The acquisition will mark a major shift in the ranks of PC game publishers, as the second largest publisher swallows up the ninth largest. Though euphemistically referred to as a merger, or "pooling of interests," the deal is an acquisition that leaves GT in control of MicroProse.

The deal also further advances GT's long-term strategy. "Our biggest goal is to become a major entertainment software publisher," says Allyne Mills, GT's vice president of corporate communications. "This deal gives us a broader portfolio of products."

"I think it was a good deal," says James Lin, an analyst with Wedbush Morgan. "GT has been criticized for not taking enough internal developers." By acquiring MicroProse, he notes that GT adds five new studios. MicroProse also has an attractive overseas distribution network, Lin says.

As for MicroProse, "they were looking for a way to exit," Lin says. "The mid-tier publishers, those beneath giants like Electronic Arts, GT, and CUC, are going to have to acquire enough companies to become major players or they will have to sell," Lin says. "Interplay is looking to go public some time next year. Virgin has been on the block for a while, with Westwood Studios as their crown jewel." And Activision's intention is to acquire small development teams and acquire distribution overseas, in order to become a major player. "But they have their work cut out for them," Lin says.

Epic MegaGames is one small, independent developer directly affected by the GT/MicroProse merger. Its *Unreal* engine has been licensed to both MicroProse and GT Interactive for several different projects, and GT will be publishing Epic's next big title, *Unreal*.

"It puts a lot of our eggs in one basket, but it's a good basket," says Mark Rein, vice president of marketing for Epic. He characterizes the merger as good for all, citing GT's business strengths and MicroProse's development talents as a complementary match. "GT is the supreme marketing and distribution company," says Rein. "They're so big and so strong, and I think MicroProse will do well with them. [MicroProse chairman] Gilman Louie and his boys do good stuff." And as part of the arrangement, Louie will be joining GT's board of directors.

Scott Miller, the president of Apogee Software (another developer whose work is published by GT), concurs. "As the PC games industry matures, we're going to see just three or four major publishers, and the rest will be fairly insignificant niche players," says Miller.

This is typical of maturing industries, Miller says, pointing to the personal computer and auto industries as examples. "Only a few companies are making most of the money, and it's very, very tough for a new company to break into the industry after it matures to this point," he says. "I predict in ten years that the only major publishers will be GT, EA, CUC/Sierra, Eidos, and Activision. The rest will be assimilated."

After the merger, more than 75 percent of GT's revenues will come from the more lucrative publishing business (instead of through distribution agreements). Prior to the merger, only 55 percent of GT's revenue came from publishing. Apart from a few hits like *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*, distribution was GT's bread and butter prior to its 1995 initial public offering. But since the IPO, the company has put its main focus on publishing, with considerable success.

Today, GT Interactive is the second largest publisher of PC games. It currently has a 9.2 percent market share, behind CUC Software (18.7 percent) and just ahead of Electronic Arts (8.9 percent). MicroProse currently ranks ninth, with 3.2 percent of the mar-

Top Ten PC Game Publishers (Jan. – Aug. 1997)

Rank	Publisher	Revenues	Market Share ($)
1.	CUC Software	$120 million	18.7%
2.	GT Interactive	$59 million	9.2%
3.	Electronic Arts	$57 million	8.9%
4.	Microsoft	$33 million	5.2%
5.	LucasArts	$33 million	5.1%
6.	Virgin	$32 million	4.9%
7.	Hasbro Interactive	$26 million	4.1%
8.	Activision	$21 million	3.3%
9.	MicroProse	$21 million	3.2%
10.	Interplay	$20 million	3.1%

Source: PC Data

Continued on page 76
See **Resistance is Futile**

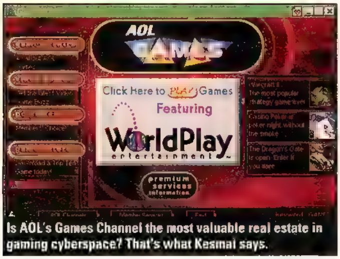
Big-Bucks Battle Over Internet Gaming

Kesmai claims AOL tried to "defraud and destroy" them

A quarrel over online gaming revenues threatens to undermine the biggest Internet business deal of the year: America Online's acquisition of CompuServe (reported in last month's Eyewitness).

Citing trademark violations, unfair competition, and monopolistic practices under the terms of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, Kesmai is taking AOL to court and demanding an injunction against the AOL/CompuServe merger.

Furthermore, Kesmai alleges that ever since AOL turned over control of its Games Channel to WorldPlay (the old ImagiNation network, now a wholly-owned subsidiary of AOL), WorldPlay has buried Kesmai's games under its own content banner, and usage of Kesmai games has dropped off some 90 percent overall. Kesmai says that because some 90 percent of its revenue came from AOL, AOL's actions are driving it and other online gaming providers (such as Engage and Simutronics) out of business.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Is AOL's Games Channel the most valuable real estate in gaming cyberspace? That's what Kesmai says.

Kesmai CEO Chris Holden says Kesmai will "live or die" based on the results of this lawsuit. He claims that AOL's Games Channel is the only place on the Internet where online gaming companies are making significant amounts of money, calling AOL's Games Channel "the most valuable real estate in cyberspace." According to Holden, Internet game networks like TEN and Mplayer are deeply in debt and struggling to survive.

But there's much more to this story than a quarrel over online gaming revenue. Kesmai also says in its complaint that the AOL/CompuServe deal will actually monopolize consumers' access to the Internet, in effect combining the number one and number two Internet service providers to create a market-commanding behemoth that will leave would-be webfooters with fewer choices.

AOL simply dismisses Kesmai's complaint. "Their lawsuit is without merit," says Tricia Primrose, a spokesperson for AOL. She characterizes Kesmai's claims as typical behavior on the part of News Corporation, the parent company of Kesmai. The News Corporation is a multinational corporation owned by Australian billionaire Rupert Murdoch, and includes media heavyweights Fox, Harper-Collins, Star TV, and *TV Guide*, to name a few.

"News Corporation has a history of using litigation as a business tool to get what they couldn't get through negotiation," she says. "They're simply trying to improve their contractual position with AOL through bullying litigation."

Despite all the turmoil, Kesmai games can still be found on America Online. The companies have a contract that runs through February 1999.

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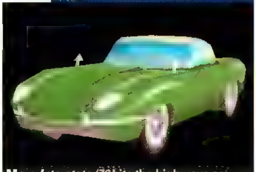
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Interstate '76 Nitro Pack: The Vigilante Files

A new, stand-alone expansion of Activision's *Interstate '76* is on the way, titled the *Vigilante Files*. Players can take on the role of Taurus, Jade, and Skeeter in 20 new single-player missions as well as enjoy new multi-player options such as Capture the Flag and races. The pack includes nine new cars, new novelty vehicles (ambulances, limousine, jeeps, and a hearse) as well as new weapons, support for force feedback, vehicle validation in multi-player games, and a brand new funky soundtrack. The game's original engine has also been updated to support popular 3D chipsets such as the 3Dfx and the Rendition Verite.


More *Interstate '76* hits the highways as Activision plans this pack for early '98.

Chron X

The Internet's first collectible card game is being created by Genetic Anamolies, a Boston-based developer. The principle is the same as in games like *Magic: The Gathering*, the difference being that you don't actually own any physical cards. Instead you download them, collect them, and trade them with other people on the Internet. Obviously, unlike real trading cards, computer files can be copied easily and traded at will, reducing the value of the cards to nil. To get around this obstacle, the company has developed a technology called Collectible Bits that restricts possession of the cards only to its rightful owners. This method of creating virtual property ensures that the game's cards will have some

Continued on page 73

From Ultima to ION

Warren Spector joins the stormfront

Warren Spector has a long and distinguished career in roleplaying games, of both the paper and computer kind. He got his start with Steve Jackson Games in 1983, a company known for such innovative hits as *Ogre*, *Toon*, *Car Wars*, and *Illuminati*, before moving to the then-giant TSR in 1987, where he worked on several projects and supervised day-to-day operations of the gaming division. But by 1989, he was ready to move on and joined Origin as its 24th employee, back when *Wing Commander* was just a twinkle in Chris Roberts' eye and work was just about to begin on *Ultima VI*. While at Origin, Spector gradually became the roleplaying flag-bearer, producing the groundbreaking Ultima Underworld games and the cult sci fi hit, *System Shock*. Tired of having to fight to make computer games, he left to join Looking Glass in 1996 to oversee *The Dark Project* and a sci fi RPG called *Junction Point*. But Looking Glass's recent merger with Intermetrics left him a bit uneasy, and he began to look for other opportunities. That's when we caught up with him.

Long-time game designer Warren Spector makes the jump from Looking Glass to ION Storm.

"There was a little bit of uncertainty about what direction [Looking Glass] was going to take and what my place was going to be in it," says Spector. "So the prudent thing seemed to be to start looking around for other opportunities, which I did." He contemplated launching a start-up — something he's never done — or joining an established company.

That's when he hooked up with ION Storm.

"I got a call from John [Romero], we talked for a while, and from a design standpoint, he's saying basically everything I've been saying for years," says Spector, referring to Romero's 'Design is Law' philosophy. "And he's got this amazing organization of game geeks making games with none of the restrictions or limitations that other companies put on you."

Spector says that to have a competitive game today you have to spend about $2 or $2.5 million on it, and that you can't ship the game until it is done. But too many companies try to limit their budgets to much less than that, or set an unrealistic timetable of nine months. They just don't allocate enough resources.

"The response at ION is that if you need resources you get them — people, computers, whatever," says Spector. "It's really pretty rocking. I went up to the Dallas [ION's HQ] looking for 'the catch'. Luckily, I'm still looking. They understand the importance of marketing but also of not having marketing drive the game creation process. It just seemed too good to be true, but so far it's as good as billed. And that's why I'm here."

> "Hey man, I've got *Quake*. I've got a stable code base for the first time in my damn life."
>
> Warren Spector, ION Storm

So *The Dark Project* is already in Spector's past, and now he's looking to the future. So after working on a slew of first-person roleplaying games — *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock*, *The Dark Project* — one has to ask, what will Spector do next?

"A first-person roleplaying game," he says. Naturally.

"First-person perspective is where it's at," says Spector. "I'm not much interested in doing anything else. Once you've got a 3D world, you might as well let the player put the camera anywhere he wants.

"I don't want to do hardcore, *Underworld*-style branching conversation stuff. I'm kind of taking my lead from Miyamoto and the console guys these days. That's what I'm obsessing about — SquareSoft games.

"Simpler conversation stuff, lots of deep characterization, lots of non-combat interaction stuff. Fairly deep world simulation, posing problems not puzzles. I don't ever want to play 'Get the dirty sweatsocks and the smelly cheese and put it in the vat and stir it up and you get the magic wand,'" he says, taking a dig at today's adventure game fare and a trend towards roleplaying lite. "What the hell is that?"

So to back him up on this ambitious design Spector has brought the heart of his Austin development team with him to ION Storm. "I took the core of it, five guys — two programmers, two artists, and a designer," says Spector. "We're total roleplaying game nerds — we just geek out on *Final Fantasy* and *Diablo*. We're all a bunch of geeks."

So Spector's next game — still nameless — will be, of course, a roleplaying game, but in what setting? "What I'm hoping is real world plus about fifty years," says Spector. "I've always wanted to do a real-world roleplaying game, but we're not quite ready to do that. But if I can add fifty years, I can

Continued on page 71
***See* From Ultima to ION**

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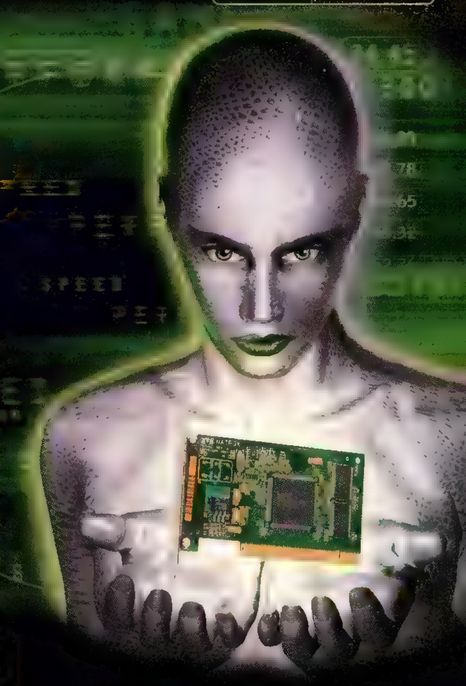

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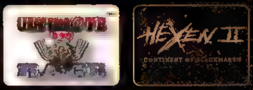

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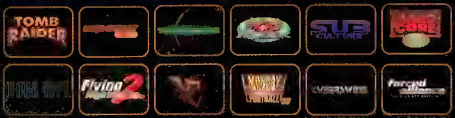

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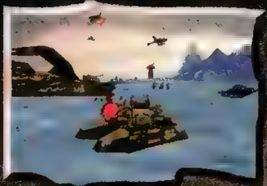
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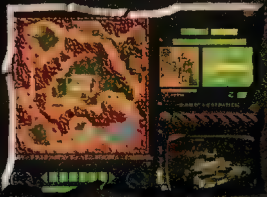
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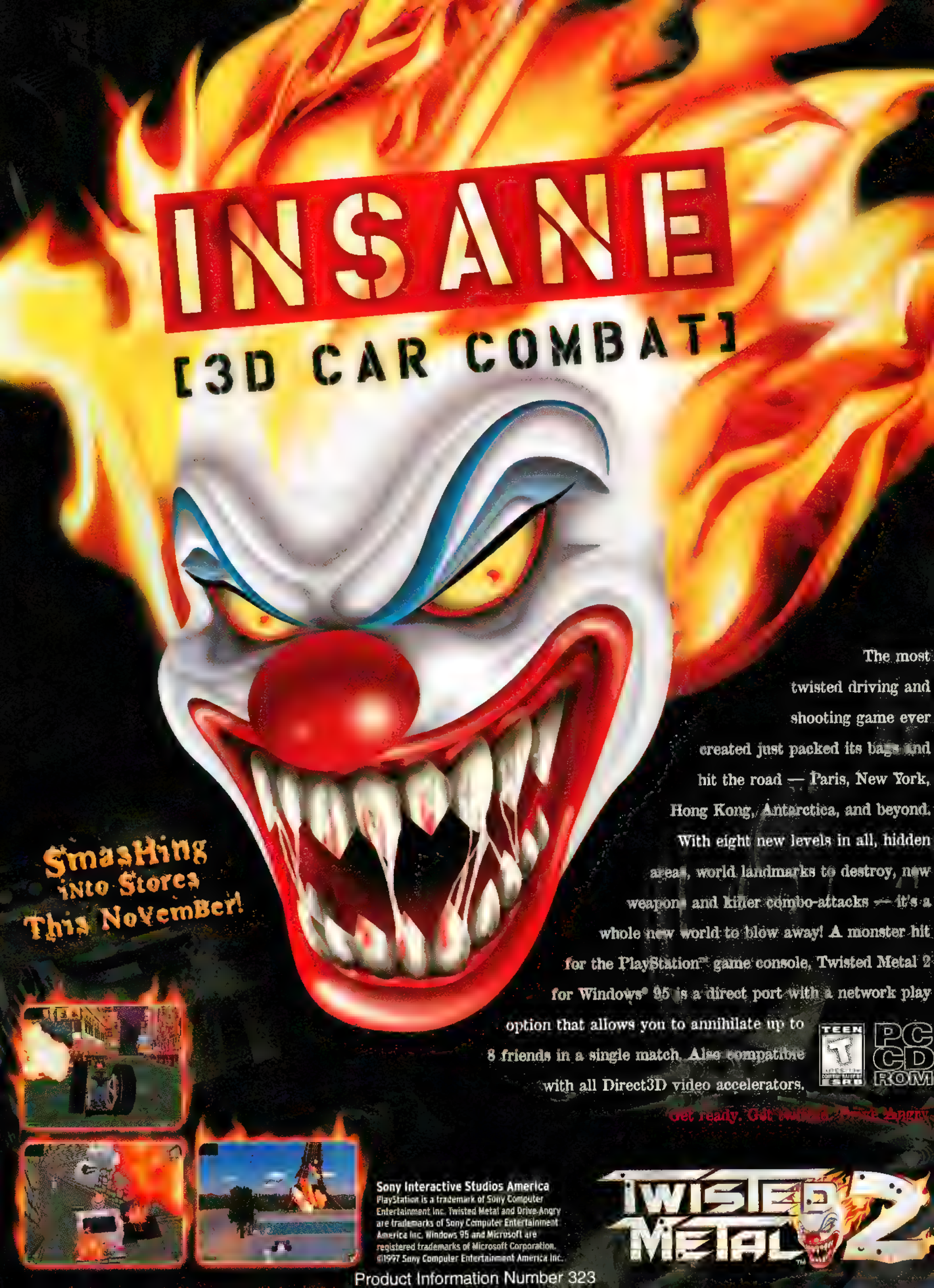

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Product Information Number 323

The Curse of the Scoop!

Half-Life, Starship Titanic *Delayed*

One of the most frustrating things gamers face is hearing that a game they're eagerly anticipating has been delayed. Unfortunately, delays are pretty common — and just the fate that has befallen both *Half-Life* and *Starship Titanic*, two recent titles getting Scoop! treatment in *PC Gamer* that won't be around in time for the holidays.

What do *Starship Titanic* and *Half-Life* (above) have in common? You won't get either of them for the holidays!

Valve Software's first-person shooter *Half-Life* has been delayed until the first quarter of 1998. The reason, the developers say, was that they needed more time to implement all of the features they have planned.

"The problem is pretty simple," says Gabe Newell, Valve's CEO. "*Half-Life* is a very intricate and detailed game, and it's taking us longer to get it done than we thought. We considered simplifying parts of the game or dropping some features to try and cut back on the amount of work, but in the end, we decided it was best to keep building the product we all believe in and take our lumps on the schedule."

We asked if the delay indicated a reworking of the game under the *Quake II* technology, but a spokesperson for Sierra said no. *Half-Life* uses the original *Quake* engine, and even though Valve's license grants it the rights to the *Quake II* code drop, using it extensively would require a major overhaul. Besides, Valve has done significant extensions of its own to the *Quake* engine.

Also late for the Holiday merry-making will be *Starship Titanic*. Developed by Digital Village and written by Douglas Adams (of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fame), *Starship* is an adventure game featuring a text parser, humorous puzzles and nutty robots. Digital Village offers some insight as to why the title, Adams' first computer game in more than a decade, has been delayed.

"The game engine and logic are fully realized and tested," says Robbie Stamp, Chief Executive of Digital Village. "We fully expect a gold master by the end of the year, but in order to ensure completion of essential quality evaluation and testing procedures, we have decided to postpone the release until 1998."

A novelization of the game from Harmony Books will be released in early November. Since Adams is busy working on the game itself, the novel was written by Adams' old friend Terry Jones, of "Monty Python" fame.

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From Ultima to Ion

Continued from page 66

play around a bit." That's not set in stone, but it is the plan. But what about technology? "Hey man, I got *Quake*," says Spector, grinning madly. "I've got a stable codebase for the first time in my damn life.

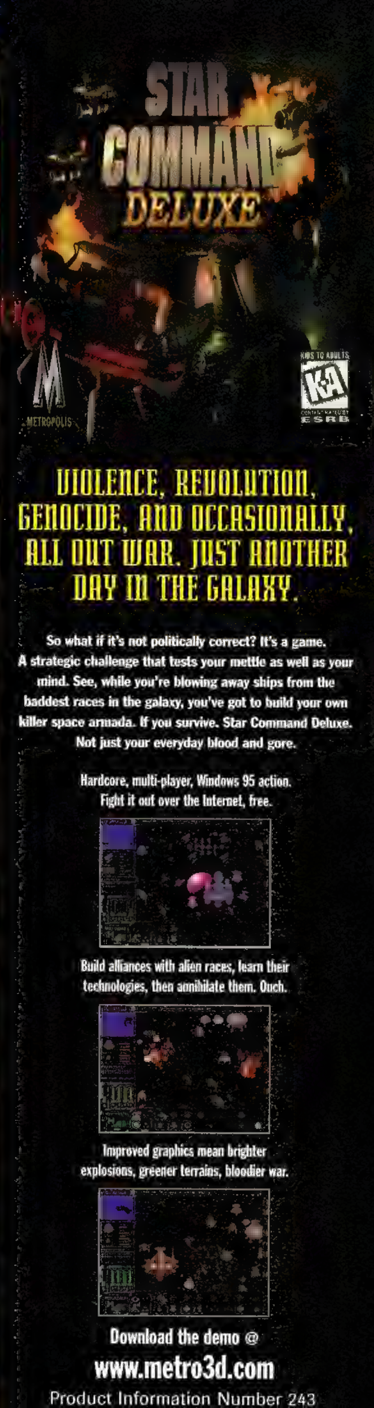
"My guys who are looking at it are saying it's real parsible code, really easily extended," he says. "All we have to do is take *Quake*, put a conversation system in it, expand the physics system, have some cooler object interaction, and we're done. So we can focus on the design — and that's the whole 'Design is Law' thing. And right on!" Spector's enthusiasm is infectious. "For a non-programmer especially, that's studly."

The opportunity to focus on design, not technology, is a luxury in the computer games industry, where the common practice is to reinvent the wheel each time a new project is started — and the majority of the development time is spent not on perfecting game design but debugging the game engine.

"Usually what we do is start from scratch," says Spector. "I've always worked places where 'not created here' [industry shorthand for licensed code] was considered the worst crime. We always built everything from scratch, and that puts so much emphasis on the technology. But now, I don't have to worry about that. The technology is under control."

So is this the first game company Spector's been at — at least since his early days with Steve Jackson and TSR — where design takes precedence over all else? "Once you get into computer games, the whole equation changes," says Spector. "In paper games, it's all about design." Though he admits that there was more emphasis on design in the early days of Origin than there is now, "this [put design first theory] is pretty much a new thing for me, though I've been preaching it for a long time."

Naturally our conversation with Spector was just that — a conversation. There is no game to show yet, and there won't be for a long time. But it's an interesting glimpse into an evolving industry, one where experienced designers — Peter Molyneux, Sid Meier, Spector, Roberts — continue to flee large companies and set up shop on their own terms, while other houses and other talents — like John Carmack — focus on cutting-edge technology.



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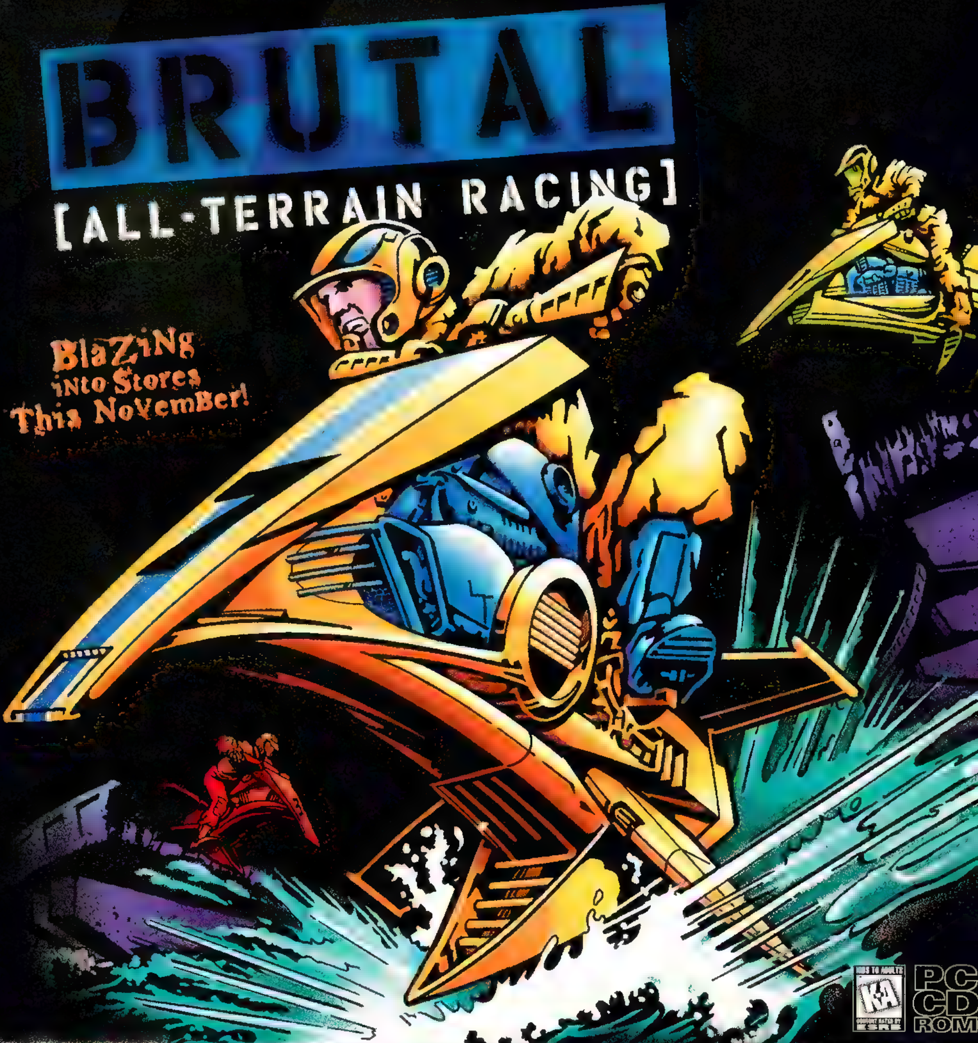
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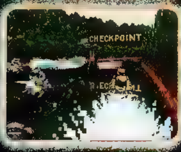

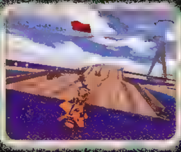

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JetMoto™

Product Information Number 325

Don't Call it "Civilization"

Thanks to trademark trouble, "Civ" will have to do

MicroProse is releasing a new expansion pack and editing set for its classic strategy game *Sid Meier's Civilization II*, but recent trademark problems with the Civilization name have prompted a name change.

Because Activision recently acquired the rights to the name Civilization, MicroProse can't call the package *Civilization II — Fantastic Worlds*, a spokesperson for MicroProse told us. Nor can it call the set *Sid Meier's Civilization II — Fantastic Worlds*, as Sid Meier is no longer at MicroProse and did not contribute to this product, and using his name would require that they pay him royalties.

So the compromise? The new pack is called *Civ II — Fantastic Worlds*, and contains 15 new scenarios set in the realms of fantasy and science fiction, complete with new art, advances, units, and the like. Also included are new editing tools and an art supply library. MicroProse just hopes that similarity in packaging and the abbreviated name will be enough for long-time *Civilization* fans to recognize the product. It should be available as you read this.

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It can't be called *Civilization*, and it can't be called Sid Meier's. But it's out there anyway.

Industry Moving to DirectSound

SoundBlaster compatibility falls to the wayside

Microsoft is indicating widespread industry support for its DirectSound 5.0 and DirectSound 3D game development APIs. Among the many technology companies lending support for the new standards are Creative Labs, Diamond Multimedia, Aureal Semiconductor, Qsound, Yamaha, and a dozen other mainstream, leading sound card manufacturers.

DirectSound sits as a middle layer between programs and sound card device drivers. New in DirectSound 5.0 is 3D audio positioning support, which Microsoft says gives the impression that sounds are coming at the listener from all around them. The new version of the API also includes an audio capture feature that records input digitally and holds it in memory. A potential use for this technology would be games that store players' comments for later playback.

The widespread adoption of the DirectSound API is also replacing SoundBlaster compatibility as the audio standard for Windows 95 games. This has contributed to a growing presence of non-SoundBlaster-compatible sound cards coming to market. These cards work fine with Windows 95 games, but support for legacy DOS games remains a thornier issue.

Sega's New Windows Console

The specifications of the Dural system, the new Windows-compatible console being developed by Sega, have been leaked. Running the PowerVR2 graphics chip and some version of Microsoft's Windows CE operating system, the new console will support both OpenGL and Direct3D, making porting games back and forth between the Dural and the PC relatively straightforward.

Under the hood is a 200MHz Hitachi CPU, a PowerVR2 dedicated graphics chip and a Yamaha sound chip. The machine should have 8MB of RAM, 8MB of video and texture RAM and 2MB of audio RAM. The Dural will use a custom CD-ROM format and may include a PCMCIA-based modem card.

Continued from page 66

real world-value, as do the cards in *Magic: The Gathering*. To get in the game, players will download a free 60 card starter set that allows unlimited online play. Registering the game for $25 gives you more cards and allows you to trade cards and participate in ladders and tournaments.

The Fifth Element

The Fifth Element* was a richly visual (although unbearable) movie, and that visual strength is being translated to the computer game version, now currently in development in France by Kalisto. It's a 3D action/adventure game that lets you play the role of either Korben Dallas or Leeloo. The engine is based on *Nightmare Creatures*, and the game involves exploring through 15 different levels as you seek out the mysterious elements. The game is set to be published by France's Gaumont, and is due in mid-1998. The game should support 3D accelerators, including the PowerVR.

Return Fire II* is almost ready for action!

Return Fire II

Return Fire II* is a new action title from MGM Interactive replete with a 3D-rendered world, 16 player TCP/IP and LAN play, and a whole arsenal of land, air, and sea units, ranging from helicopters and jump jets to PT boats and aircraft carriers. MGM says that the single-user game will have an intelligent opponent which will make solo play feel like a multiplayer game. In concurrent development for the PlayStation and Windows 95, the game is slated for a March 1998 release date.

ECG

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Product Information Number 328

It's a Grim Fandango!

LucasArts' next adventure

LucasArts game designer Tim Schafer (*Full Throttle, Day of the Tentacle*) is at work on a new graphic adventure called *Grim Fandango*. Inspired by film noir and Mexican folklore, the concept is an intriguing blend of crime and corruption in the afterlife, with an art style inspired by folk art from Mexico's Day of the Dead celebrations. We spoke with Schafer about the game shortly after it was announced.

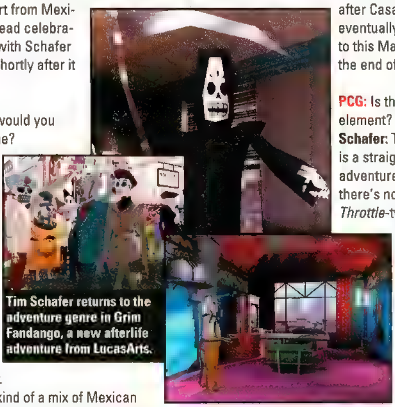
PC Gamer: How would you describe the game?
Schafer: It's a 3D graphic adventure with the characters rendered on the fly in 3D. But it's still a graphic adventure like *Full Throttle*. Playstyle comes from the lineage of *Bioforge* or *Alone in the Dark*.

The look is kind of a mix of Mexican Folk Art and film noir movies. The characters are very stylized, kind of simple, but they have a really distinct art style. We used concept work by Peter Chan, who also did the concept art for *Full Throttle* and *Day of the Tentacle*.

PCG: Why mix so many disparate art styles?
Schafer: I guess the only unifying thing about all those different styles are that they're things that I like, and it's kind of strange how they all gel together, that they have things in common.

Back in college, I took a class in folklore and there was a section on Mexico's Day of the Dead, and some of the stories of the four year journey of the soul in the afterlife. And all the perils that the souls face just seemed to make this afterlife, from the perspective of making graphic adventures, a perfect setting.

PCG: What does the afterlife look like in the game?
Schafer: It starts off in a normal-looking town, a kind of art deco city, normal except for that everyone's a skeleton. Once the characters travel across the land of the dead, they end up in strange places, like a petrified forest filled with flying spiders, tar pits filled with flaming demons, or an exotic port town kind of modeled after Casablanca. You're eventually trying to trek to this Mayan Temple at the end of the world.



Tim Schafer returns to the adventure genre in Grim Fandango, a new afterlife adventure from LucasArts.

PCG: Is there an action element?
Schafer: The gameplay is a straight, hardcore adventure game, so there's not any *Full Throttle*-type action sequences. But in this game there's none of that; there is an element of danger, in that characters can die. But that was another challenge — how do you threaten someone who's already dead? In our world we have something called getting sprouted, which means a dart is shot into your body and spreads chlorophyll into your veins. Your body turns into a heap of wildflowers on the ground, with bees and butterflies all around.

PCG: Do you think that graphic adventures are moving into 3D in a big way?
Schafer: This is LucasArts' first 3D graphic adventure. The entire games industry is going into 3D, but I think there's a place for 2D still, though my interest lies in 3D. You can do stuff in 2D that you just can't do in 3D, if you want to have that much control over your art style.

There's something about the freedom it gives you as far as story-boarding and camera angles. It lets the camera be low, shooting up, an overhead shot — all sorts of Film School-y *Citizen Kane* type stuff if you want to. It's more challenging, but it allows more freedom, too.

The Interactive Fiction Collection

Those who long for the days of the great text adventures need to hop onto the Internet and download the thirty-five final entries in the third annual Interactive Fiction Competition. This contest serves not only to recognize the best working authors of text adventures but also to help build awareness amongst mainstream gamers that people are still writing, playing, and enjoying text-based adventure games.

Gamers are encouraged to download the collection and play the games, then submit their votes for their favorite entrants to the judges. Votes can be sent until December 31st, 1997. All of the current entries and the engines needed to run them have been packed into one big .zip file and can be found on the *PC Gamer* web page at *www.pcgamer.com* or the IFC's home page, at *www.ifcompetition.org*.

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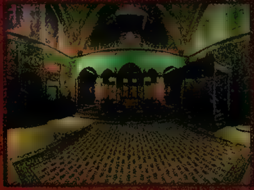

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Product Information Number 121

News Briefs

Final Fantasy V-VII in '98

It's one of the most frequently asked questions you hit us with — is *Final Fantasy VII* coming out for the PC? The answer is yes, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Final Fantasy VI*, and *Final Fantasy V* will all be released for the PC early in 1998. More specific information, such as firm ship dates or system requirements, has not yet been revealed.

Prima Gets Strategy Rights

A new agreement gives Prima Publishing the exclusive rights to publish the official strategy guides for all Electronic Arts computer and videogames, including those from Bullfrog, Origin, Maxis, Jane's, and EA Sports. Strategy guides have become an important auxiliary revenue stream for game publishers. A similar agreement was made by Prima and THQ.

E3 Returns to LA

The largest trade show in the computer and videogames industry will be returning to Los Angeles in 1999. Next year's show will again be held in Atlanta as part of a prior two year commitment, but after that E3 returns to LA for a five year run.

EA Names new COO/Pastry King

Publishing giant Electronic Arts named John Riccitiello as president and chief operating officer this September. Riccitiello will report directly to EA chairman and CEO Larry Probst, and will oversee EA's worldwide distribution network and marketing efforts. He comes from the Sara Lee Corporation, where he was the president and chief executive officer of its bakery division.

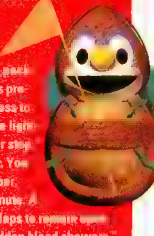
Rednecks in Court

Unauthorized level pack collections continue to plague retail games with built-in level editors. The latest wrangling has Interplay threatening legal action against Head Games over the latter's release of "So You Wanna be a Redneck?" level pack, which works with Interplay's *Redneck Rampage* game. "It's not something that was authorized by us," a spokesperson for Interplay told *PC Gamer*. "We are looking at it, and we consider it most likely to be a violation of our intellectual property and our copyright."

The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

Camping, for those of you who don't know, is the deathmatch tactic wherein the player camps out in one prime sniper position, often near the power-ups and other goodies. To whom else could we turn for the definitive guide to camping but our lovable, loveless tropical trickster — Coconut Monkey? Here are his tips for would-be campers (though it should be noted CM prefers the less-pejorative term, "Hiker"):



- "*Quake* handily provides you with a loose brown satchel to use as a backpack, but I heartily recommend upgrading to a heavy-duty, external frame pack. The top-loading pockets and zippered side-pockets provide an abundance of storage space and rapid access to your rockets, nailgun clips, and grenades, while the lightweight, durable construction adds extra pep to your step."
- "For extended camping trips, you'll also need a tent. You can't go wrong with the *Quake*Guy 2000 SuperSleeper, which can be easily assembled in less than one minute. A rigid lodge pole extends over each door, allowing flaps to remain open for easy sniping, while protecting campers from sudden blood showers."
- "For maximum comfort while waiting for other players to join your server, invest in a heavy-duty, Hoodwinker sleeping bag. It's lightweight, warm, affordable, and 100 percent guaranteed against Shambler penetration."

"My final piece of advice to *Quake* hikers: if people starting calling you a camper in a match, remember, two can play that game. Here's my handy definition of a camper: anyone who scores a frag on you. Bind a macro that has you yell 'You darned camper!' and hit it every time someone kills you, even if it was a telefrag."

1. Jedi Knight
2. Age of Empires
3. Quake
4. Dark Reign
5. Red Alert: Aftermath
6. NHL '98
7. Incubation
8. Hexen II
9. Total Annihilation
10. Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far

Resistance is Futile

Continued from page 64

ket, so the enlarged GT will hold about 12 percent of the market, giving it a clear lead over third-place EA in PC game sales.

Besides providing a numerical boost to GT's industry standing, the MicroProse takeover adds a lot to GT's overall gaming cataolg. "MicroProse's products give GT an immediate presence in the strategy and simulation markets, two genres GT is not well-known for," says GT's Mills. A number of well-known brands are held by MicroProse, all of which should be familiar to PC gamers: *Civilization*, *MechWarrior III*, *X-COM*, *the Falcon* and *Top Gun* sims, *Master of Orion/Magic*, a Star Trek license, *Magic: The Gathering*, and *Grand Prix*.

GT will also leverage MicroProse's product line by porting more MicroProse games over to the consoles, an additional revenue stream that MicroProse has not aggressively pursued over the last couple of years. And with the addition of MicroProse's studios, one third of GT's software will be developed in-house. (In-house products have higher profit margins per product, and internal development also makes a company like GT less dependent on outside developers. GT lost publishing deals with Raven and id Software to its rival Activision earlier this year. id's *Quake II* in particular is expected to be a best-seller, and those profits will go to Activision, not GT.)

GT, like the Borg, has assimilated MicroProse.

Another MicroProse strength is its international sales effort, says Mills. Currently, 65 percent of MicroProse's revenues come from overseas sales, as opposed to 40 percent for GT. MicroProse's strength overseas will help push GT products into foreign markets.

On the down side, MicroProse is not known for large profits. Prior to fiscal year 1997, the company trudged through four consecutive years of red ink, with net losses of approximately $39.8 million and $18.1 million in fiscal years 1996 and 1995 respectively.

Mills is aware of MicroProse's financial problems, but points to its stockpile of $34 million in cash as a major plus. GT currently has a credit line of $65 million, of which $35 million has been used. MicroProse's cash will be used to pay off this amount, freeing up GT's full credit line. But on the other hand, MicroProse has a significant debt of its own; as of March 31, 1997, it owed approximately $32.7 million. This debt rolls over to GT, with an accompanying interest rate of 6.5 percent per year.

For employees, a merger always brings up the possibility of layoffs. GT currently has about 260 employees, while MicroProse has about 240. "In the next couple of months, a transition team will be evaluating the companies," says Mills. "It's possible there will be some consolidation," she says, but says it is too early to tell which employees or how many would be affected by the merger.

The new, combined company will also take on a new name, which won't be announced until the end of the year. A corporate ID program is being implemented that will help the two companies consolidate and streamline their operations and come up with a new name and logo.

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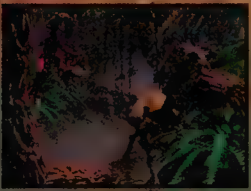

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Havoline
maxell

3Dfx™ interactive

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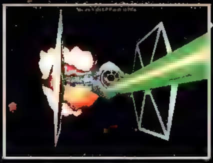

STAR WARS
X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER

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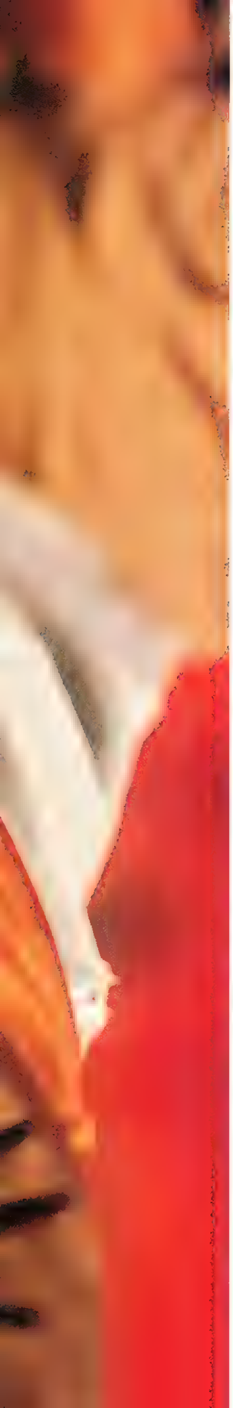
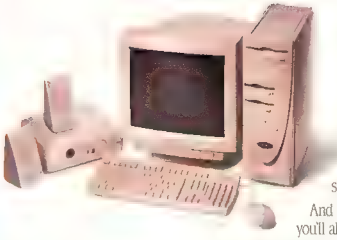
Product Information Number 226

"Kick ASS"
(Gasp! Well..I never!)





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Come one, come all, ladies and gentlemen,
as we present the annual PC Gamer*...*

HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Yes, it's that time of the year again. It's the season of giving, and in that spirit PC Gamer *once again bursts its seams to bring you the ultimate guide to holiday gaming — everything you need to know about the essential hardware and software that will guarantee you Gaming Goodness during the festivities.*

TOP 40 GAMES

We sift through this year's bumper crop of games and present our personal picks — the ones that should be on everybody's holiday wish-list.

PAGE 86

PREVIEWS

Here's a round-up of some of the other big-name blockbusters that will be competing for your attention this festive season.

PAGE 107

HARDWARE

As a phenomenal year for PC gaming hardware draws to a close, we pick out the best buys in controllers, speakers, systems, and more.

PAGE 129

KID'S SOFTWARE

What better way to keep the kids happy this holiday season than with some well-made educational software? Here's the best of the bunch.

PAGE 151

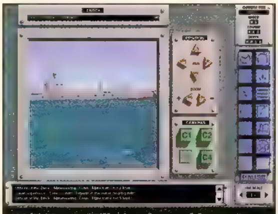
TOP 40 GAMES

Nothing says "Happy Holidays" like a marathon session with a really great PC game. Here's our list of 40 sure-fire winners guaranteed to give you something better to do than help Aunt Tilly bake her anatomically correct gingerbread men....

688(I) Hunter/Killer

Jane's Combat Simulations • (800) 245-4525
www.janes.ea.com

Good submarine sims — especially simulations of modern-day sub combat — are few and far between, and *688(I) Hunter/Killer* is easily the best. Developed in cooperation with Jane's Information Systems, the legendary publisher of real-world military reference works like *Jane's Defence Weekly* and *Jane's Fighting Ships*, this sim is a detailed and realistic recreation of tense engagements in a Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarine. With five different sonar systems and a host of other accurately modeled sensors and systems, *688(I) Hunter/Killer* takes some practice to understand and master, but it gives you an intriguing (and entertaining) look at what contemporary submarine combat must be like. It's not for everyone, but hard-core missile-heads will find it very absorbing and satisfying.

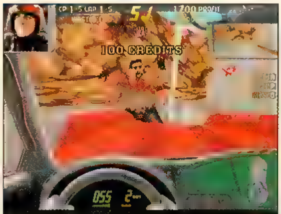


688(I) Hunter/Killer **is a thoroughly convincing simulation of combat in an Improved Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarine.**

Betrayal in Antara

Sierra • (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Several years ago, Sierra had an unexpected hit with *Betrayal at Krondor*, a fantasy roleplaying game developed by Dynamix and based on the popular novels of Raymond E. Feist. This year, Feist has taken his world of Krondor to 7th Level to develop *Return to Krondor* — but the designers that gave *Betrayal at Krondor* its terrific interface and gameplay are still at Dynamix. For RPG fans who value real fun over a well-known license, that means the true sequel to *Betrayal at Krondor* is Sierra's *Betrayal in Antara*. It's set in an entirely new world with an entirely new cast of characters, but *Betrayal in Antara* is in every way the heir apparent to its classic predecessor. Add high-resolution graphics, a new magic system, and an improved combat engine, and you've got a very satisfying bit of traditional roleplaying.



Carmageddon **won't win any awards for political correctness, but it's still good, clean fun.**

Carmageddon

Interplay • (800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

This game's not for the squeamish or the politically correct — but if you've seen the ads for *Carmageddon*, you already knew that. Here's a racing game with a macabre twist: in addition to completing the course ahead of your competitors, you can also win by killing them before they reach the finish line, or by wiping out all of the innocent pedestrians you'll find along the way. *Carmageddon* isn't the least bit embarrassed by its violent premise — it even gives you bonus points for style if you manage to squish a pedestrian against a nearby building or spin your out-of-control car through a crowd of the poor devils. This game has no socially redeeming value, but it's a lot of fun — and it's a lot safer to take out your frustrations on *Carmageddon* than to vent your road-rage on the commute to work.

Dark Reign

Activision • (310) 255-2000
www.activision.com

Remember the flood of 3D shoot-'em-ups that tried to duplicate the phenomenal success of *Doom*? Well, 1997 has brought a similar flood of real-time strategy games, all attempting to capitalize on the huge popularity of instant classics like Blizzard's WarCraft games and Westwood's Command & Conquer series. We've only seen a few games that stand a chance of distinguishing themselves from the crowd, and *Dark Reign* is one of them. Rather than simply giving us more of the same, *Dark Reign* promises to improve gameplay with better artificial intelligence — not just for the enemy, but for the units under your command. The results are pretty impressive; *Dark Reign* lets you assign complex waypoint routes to your troops, and it gives you three ways to tweak the behavior of a unit or group of units — all of which means you can trust your armies to carry out your orders without constant attention from you, leaving you time to concentrate on your grand strategy.

Diablo

Blizzard • (800) 953-7669
www.blizzard.com

Blizzard's first roleplaying game is reminiscent of classic dungeon-crawls like *Temple of Apshai* and its sequels — but with beautiful high-res graphics and an even more important twist: multi-player action. Whether it's two players via modem or serial link, or as many as four players via a local-area network or the Internet, *Diablo* brings the concepts of cooperation and competition to computer roleplaying with style. Best of all, Blizzard's free battle.net server means you can play multi-player *Diablo* over the Internet any time of the day or night for no more cash than what your Internet service provider already charges. If you're interested in some action-oriented roleplaying with real people, check *Diablo* out.

Diablo is a good, old-fashioned dungeon crawl with state-of-the-art graphics and sound.

Dungeon Keeper challenges you to build a dank dungeon and populate it with monsters.

Dungeon Keeper

Bullfrog • (800) 245-4525
www.bullfrog.ea.com

The concept behind Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper* is the kind of idea that makes you wonder why someone didn't think of it sooner. By putting you in the shoes of an evil wizard charged with battling the forces of good by building twisted dungeons and populating them with monsters and demons, *Dungeon Keeper* no doubt fulfills a fantasy most roleplaying gamers have had. It's not an RPG — in fact, it's a real-time strategy game with roots in *SimCity* and Bullfrog's own Populous series — but RPG fans will certainly appreciate it, and so will any gamer who appreciates creativity and innovation. What other strategy game encourages you to keep your troops in line by slapping and torturing them? *Dungeon Keeper* is definitely something different.

Extreme Chess

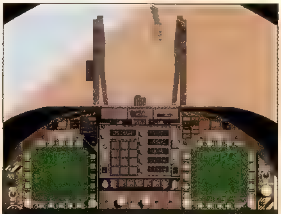
Davidson/Simon & Schuster • (800) 545-7677
www.education.com

You won't find a big library of artfully designed chess boards and pieces to choose from in *Extreme Chess*; in fact, the game's interface is a little clunky. What you will find is a very, very strong opponent. *Extreme Chess* is based on the latest iteration of Fritz, the notorious computer chess program that has beaten Kasparov, Short, and several other grand masters — not to mention IBM's much-vaunted and better-publicized Deep Thought II. You'll also find what may be the best online coach in computerized chess — *Extreme Chess*'s coach can analyze the board and your play, even warning you when you're about to make a bad move, suggesting an alternative, and explaining the difference between the two. Here's a computer chess game for serious players — or those who are serious about learning.

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0

Graphic Simulations • (972) 386-7575
www.graphsim.com

Here's one of those most rare of PC games: a translation from the Macintosh that holds up well against any of its competitors that were designed specifically for the PC. The fact that it's a detailed simulation of the Navy's F/A-18 Hornet makes it even more rare; for some reason, this graceful, versatile fighter has never gotten much attention in the world of computer sims. *Hornet 3.0* redresses this injustice with class; its graphics aren't spectacular, but its deep, authentic gameplay is — and the lack of flashy visuals means this sim runs very smoothly on a reasonably fast Pentium. Like SSI's *Su-27*, this sim is more interested in authenticity and detail than state-of-the-art sights and sounds; if you fell for the SSI game, you'll be equally pleased with *Hornet 3.0*.


F/A-18 Hornet 3.0 is light on visual flash, but it's heavy on detail and realism.

FIFA Soccer 97

EA Sports • (800) 245-4525
www.easports.com

EA Sports continues to build a reputation for great action-oriented sports games, and *FIFA Soccer 97* is another feather in the company's cap. Players rendered in gorgeous real-time 3D make the game look and feel like the real thing, and the illusion is completed by EA Sports' Virtual Stadium technology, which lets you view

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Product Information Number 246

the action from virtually any angle you can imagine. The first FIFA had some of the most convincing play-by-play voice-overs in PC sports; *FIFA 97* solidifies EA Sports' dominance in implementing this subtle, tricky technique. Our own Gary Whitta, English import and dedicated fan of "real football," gave *FIFA 97* an Editors' Choice rating; if it's good enough for him, it must be tops in the field.

Flying Corps

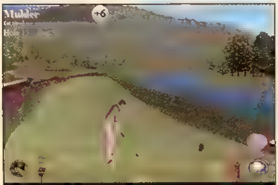
Empire Interactive • (800) 216 9706
www.empire-us.com

It's been years since we had a really good simulation of the dawn of fighter combat — World War One — but Empire's *Flying Corps* fills that gap admirably. If modern fighter sims, with their high-tech radar and beyond-visual-range engagements, don't satisfy your thirst for visceral action, you belong in The Great War, and *Flying Corps* takes you there in style. It has some steep hardware requirements; you'll need a hot Pentium (200MHz or better) to fly it with all the detail turned on, and a 3Dfx accelerator wouldn't hurt now that a patch is available to support it. But the reward is a beautiful, detailed simulation of early air-to-air battles that can be as realistic as you want it to be.

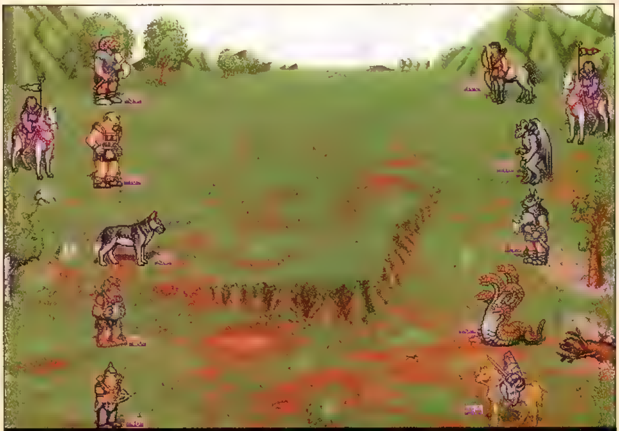
Front Page Sports: Golf

Sierra • (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

This one started life as Headgate's *The Golf Club*, an all-new game from Vance Cook, one of the founding fathers of high-tech, high-res golf simulations. When Sierra picked it up for its Front Page Sports series, it retained the innovations that would distinguish it from its competitors. *FPS: Golf* takes some very different approaches to the sport from the all-time monster hit of the genre, *Links LS*, but it's a winner in its own right. If you tried *SimGolf* from Maxis and were turned off by its mouse-controlled swing, you'll still want to give *FPS: Golf*'s version a try; it lets you calibrate it to match your own particular touch, and with a little practice it really does give you finer, more subtle control over your swing than the traditional click-click-click of earlier golf games.



The graphics in *Front Page Sports: Golf* don't quite match those of Links LS, but the gameplay is solid and rewarding.



Heroes of Might & Magic II improves on virtually every aspect of its predecessor, making it a wonderfully challenging and addictive game of warfare in a fantasy setting.

Heroes of Might and Magic II

New World Computing • (800) 336-3506
www.nwcomputing.com

One of PC gaming's most addictive strategic challenges, *Heroes of Might & Magic*, got a wonderful sequel in 1997. *Heroes II* is everything its predecessor was and more; better yet, it's conclusive proof that there's still plenty of room for turn-based gameplay, even in this, The Year of Real-Time Strategy Games. Don't let its traditional fantasy setting fool you; this is a serious strategy game, with plenty of challenges to satisfy the sharpest gamers. An add-on package provides more campaigns and scenarios, and an excellent editor lets you create your own. Be warned, though — don't go near *Heroes of Might & Magic II* unless you've got hours to spend on a game that will absolutely hook you from the start.

iM1A2 Abrams

Interactive Magic • (800) 789-1534
www.imagicgames.com

Fans of military simulations know that MicroProse's *M-1 Tank Platoon* is one of the all-time best sims ever created. Arnold Hendrick, one of that game's principal designers, led the team that created Interactive Magic's *iM1A2 Abrams*, which in many ways is a 1997 update of *Tank Platoon*. The graphics are nothing to write home about, but the gameplay, which emphasizes cooperation and combined-arms tactics, makes *iM1A2* the undisputed thematic sequel to the MicroProse classic. It doesn't just put you in command of the Army's baddest tanks; it lets you command an entire platoon of heavy rollers and support units in campaigns based on today's headlines.

Imperialism

SSI • (888) 808-4311
www.ssionline.com

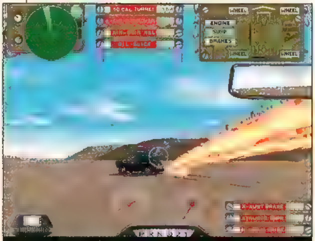
This terrific strategy game appeared on the scene with very little fanfare, but don't let that keep you from taking a serious look at it; it's a rule of PC gaming that the best games don't always get the most publicity. *Imperialism* is a clear descendant of classic games like *Civiliza-*

tion; it covers every aspect of empire-building, from economics to diplomacy to out-and-out warfare. There's even a tactical option that lets you take charge of every battle. If you're a serious strategy gamer looking for a new challenge that encompasses the best aspects of world-building and tactical combat, look no further than *Imperialism.*

Interstate '76

Activision • (310) 255-2000
www.activision.com

Interstate '76 is an action game with attitude. Set in a 1976 that never was, the game tells the story of heroic auto-vigilantes who took to the highways in heavily armed cars to combat a crime wave inspired by the very real gas crunch of the 1970s. *Interstate '76* satisfies an urge you may not have realized you had — the desire to hop into a heavily armed muscle-car, listen to 1970s-era funk, and wreak havoc on a gang of decidedly uncool villains. If you're a fan of classic American sports cars, motorized mayhem, cheesy TV action shows like "Starsky & Hutch" or "The Dukes of Hazzard" — or just good gaming, you'll flip for *Interstate '76.*



Interstate '76 is a unique action game set in an alternate 1976; old-time muscle cars and a great funk soundtrack give the game oodles of attitude.

Jack Nicklaus 4

Accolade • (415) 985-1700
www.accolade.com

1997 was a great year for golf games, and Accolade's *Jack Nicklaus 4* is ample proof. This latest installment in a classic series provides visuals nearly as good as those in Access' *Links LS,* plus something the Links series has never given us — a deep, rich, user-friendly course designer. *Nicklaus 4*'s golf game is very good, but its editor is great; it gives you all the tools you need to become the next Pete Dye and create a course that could challenge the Golden Bear himself. Better yet, you can surf the web and find some gamer-created courses that, for legal reasons, have never appeared in a PC sim or have only been available for other sims — courses like Augusta National, Pebble Beach, Pinehurst, and more. *Nicklaus 4* is the perfect golf sim for gamers looking for some do-it-yourself action.

Jedi Knight

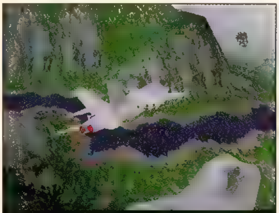
LucasArts • (888) 532-4263
www.lucasarts.com

Not since *TIE Fighter* has a game captured the look, sound, and feel of the Star Wars universe the way *Jedi Knight* does. *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* disappointed some gamers, but this sequel to *Dark Forces* does more than enough to restore LucasArts' reputation as makers of top-notch games. *Jedi Knight* casts you in the role of Kyle Katarn, the devil-may-care mercenary hero of *Dark Forces* — but this time around, Kyle's on a path toward his destiny with the Force, and it's up to you to see that he becomes a Jedi Knight or a devotee of the Dark Side. *Jedi Knight* is a first-person shooter built on a versatile and powerful 3D engine that makes it a worthy rival of *Quake* and its spin-offs. This is some serious Gaming Goodness.

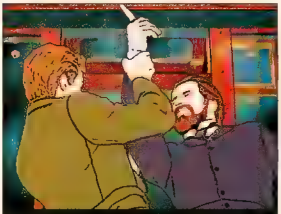
Jetfighter III

Interplay • (800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

This game, based on the Air Force's high-tech F-22 Raptor jet, falls somewhere between the flashy graphics and action-oriented gameplay of NovaLogic's *F-22 Lightning II* and the serious simulation of DID's *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter.* In keeping with the philosophy that shaped the first two Jetfighter games, the emphasis here is on fun with a dash of authenticity. *JF3* casts you as a rookie pilot assigned to a special UN force tasked with combating the clear and present danger presented by Colombia's drug lords. In *JF3*'s fictional universe, the pusher-kings are armed with some serious high-tech hardware, so you've got your work cut out for you as you fly carrier-based air-to-air and strike missions in the F-22 and F-18 Hornet. It's not painstakingly realistic, but there's lots of fun to be had in *Jetfighter III.*



Jetfighter III lets you fly the F/A-18 Hornet or the F-22 Raptor in action-oriented missions over some gorgeous terrain.



The Last Express is a real-time graphic adventure that flawlessly captures the look and feel of a trip on the exotic Orient Express.

The Last Express

Broderbund • (800) 548-1798
www.broder.com

Veteran gamers only need to know this is the latest creation of Jordan Mechner, the man who brought us *Prince of Persia* and its sequel. Unlike those games, though, *The Last Express* isn't an arcade-style action game; this is an atmospheric adventure game with a twist. *The Last Express* takes place in real time, so the pressure's always on as you attempt to solve a mystery and thwart a terrorist plot. This game takes the legendary mystique of the Orient Express and spins it into a unique period adventure, backed up by lovely art-nouveau visuals and an absorbing story line. If you're tired of graphic adventures that turn out to be nothing more than puzzle games dressed up with pretty pictures, give *The Last Express* a look.

Links LS 1998 Edition

Access • (800) 800-4880
www.accesssoftware.com

The absolute, undisputed king-daddy of PC golf simulations, *Links LS,* gets a facelift in its "1998 Edition," conveniently available in 1997. *Links LS*

Continued on page 96

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GT Interactive Software
www.gtgames.com

Product Information Number 151

Actual in-game screen
Cinematic Sequence
Cinematic Sequence
Actual in-game screen shot

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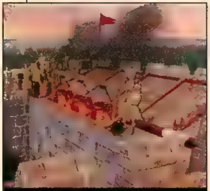
represented a quantum leap ahead of all other golf sims — especially in terms of graphic splendor. *Links LS 98* adds new graphic embellishments like faster redraws, shading, and water reflections. Online games work better now, including Internet-based play for as many as eight players, and full-blown tournaments are also possible. New scoring rules make their appearance here, too — Scramble and Alternate Shot games are now available. Naturally, all of the features that made the original game a hit have been carried forward, putting *Links LS 98* on the short list of must-have golf games.

Lords of the Realm II

Sierra • (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

If you need proof that Sierra's acquisition of Impressions didn't hurt the respected strategy game developer, look no further than *Lords of the Realm II*. This game starts with large-scale empire-building, challenging you to create and maintain a medieval kingdom, constructing castles, building and recruiting armies — then moves to a tactical scale for real-time battles that include field engagements and full-blown castle sieges complete with siege towers, catapults, rams, and boiling oil. The Siege Pack add-on provides a new big-picture campaign game, and it also allows you to concentrate on tactical action by fighting real-time sieges without indulging in the full strategic game — but even without it, *LOTRII* confirms Impressions' position as a preeminent strategy game designer.

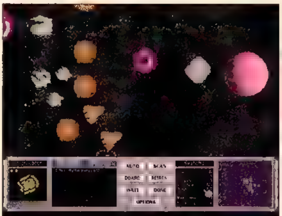


In *Lords of the Realm II*, sieges are recreated in brutal detail, right down to the boiling oil.

Master of Orion: Battle at Antares

MicroProse • (410) 771-1151
www.microprose.com

The original *Master of Orion* is still a cult hit, even years after its release. Coming from the publishers of the classic *Civilization*, *Battle at Antares* is to games of galactic conquest what *Civ II* was to empire-building games. Everything here is new, from graphics to gameplay, but the ingredients that made the original game a classic are still present — right down to the Guardian of Orion, that most formidable of spacefaring foes. New to the mix is the planetary view, where you build and manage your colonies on each new world; it brings a touch of *Civilization* to the game — as well as the kind of micromanagement that many *Master of Orion* players were asking for.



Master of Orion: Battle at Antares is one of the most detailed and entertaining games of galactic conquest available for the PC.

M.A.X.

Interplay • (800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

The name stands for Mechanized Assault & Exploration, but like most game titles, it's not important. What matters is that this is a surprisingly deep and versatile turn-based strategy game. *M.A.X.* features a wide range of futuristic military units, all designed to work with and against each other in a game nearly as well balanced as chess. No single strategy will ensure victory in the game's many diabolical single-player scenarios, much less in multi-player action — and a very flexible custom-mission generator gives *M.A.X.* some serious replay value. A sequel is in the works, and it'll bring real-time play to the recipe, but anyone who gives *M.A.X.* a fair shake will agree that turn-based games can be every bit as involving and addictive as their real-time counterparts.

MDK

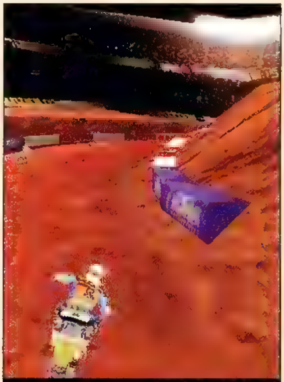
Playmates Interactive • (310) 407-1490
www.playmatestoys.com

The creators of *Earthworm Jim* bring us another improbable superhero — a guy named Kurt who has built his own high-tech sniper-suit to battle an invading force of extraterrestrial fiends. This is a smooth-scrolling 3D action game with very impressive graphics — it even goes into a first-person perspective when you switch to the suit's sniper view — but *MDK* has less in common with *Doom* or *Quake* than with videogame-style shooters. It also has at least one thing in common with the *Earthworm Jim* games — the quirky humor that Shiny Entertainment brings to all of its creations. In *MDK*, the hero is aided by his faithful mutt, Bonz, who flies surgical air strikes at opportune moments, and the over-confident aliens wave playfully and shake their booties *Braveheart*-style until Kurt surprises them with a well-placed sniper shot. *MDK*'s funny, fast-paced action makes it much more than a me-too shoot-'em-up.

Moto Racer GP

Electronic Arts • (800) 245-4525
www. ea.com

This top-drawer racing game was a long time in coming. We got our first taste of it in a nearly-complete beta early this year, and the tantalizing demo has been available for quite a while — but it wasn't until very recently that *Moto Racer* found a U.S. publisher in Electronic Arts. The wait was worth it; this is probably the best arcade-style racing game of 1997. With Direct3D support for 3D accelerators and silky-smooth animation, *Moto Racer GP* is nearly as much fun to watch as it is to play. And that's saying a lot — its balance of road races and moto-cross tracks set in exotic locations, as well as multi-player support, make *Moto Racer GP* a real blast.



Moto Racer GP combines beautiful graphics with a real sense of speed to create one of the year's best arcade-style racing games.

NASCAR Racing 2

Sierra • (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

When the masters of racing realism at Papyrus came out with *IndyCar Racing*, ecstatic fans demanded that they turn their considerable talents to a stock-car sim. The result was *NASCAR Racing*, the most authentic stock car game to date. And when Papyrus updated *IndyCar* last year with state-of-the-art graphics and gameplay, the call went out for a similar facelift for *NASCAR*. That brings us to *NASCAR Racing 2*, an amazingly detailed and realistic simulation of a uniquely American motor sport. In addition to being a thoroughly overhauled version of the original, *NASCAR 2* adds a complete paint-shop that lets you create your own custom racing team — from the decals on the car right down to the pit crew's uniforms — and excellent multi-player support. This is a must-have for hard-core PC racers.

NHL 98

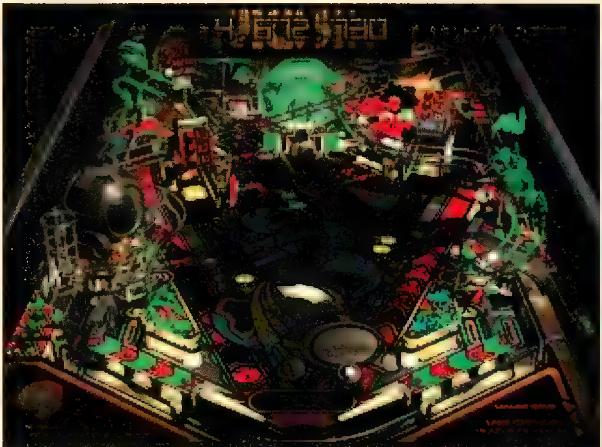
EA Sports • (800) 245-4525
www.easports.com

The hardware requirements are pretty steep, but *NHL 98* rewards gamers with the most engaging and visually impressive PC hockey sim yet. High-resolution graphics, big, 3D players, and detailed, fluid animations create a look so realistic you can almost believe you're watching the real thing on TV. Everything's here, from custom-painted goalie masks to jersey-pulling fist fights to slapshots that shake — and even break — the plexiglass. Support for 3D accelerators and multi-button, multi-player gamepads make this year's version of NHL more fun to watch and play than ever. If you're a big hockey fan — or even if you just love a good sports game — *NHL 98* should be in your collection.

Privateer 2: The Darkening

Origin Systems • (800) 245-4525
www.origin.ea.com

This isn't precisely the game that fans of the original *Privateer* were expecting — it falls somewhere between the free-wheeling fun of that game and Origin's more linear, heavily cinematic Wing Commander series — but it's an excellent space shooter in its own right. An entirely new 3D graphics engine gets some beautifully detailed starships moving smoothly across your screen without the need for a Pentium II. And with a cast that includes John Hurt and Christopher Walken, *Privateer 2*'s cinematic sequences feature better acting than any of the Wing Commander games (sorry, Mr. Hamill, but it's true). Finally, the fact that the game was created by an almost exclusively British team means it has a distinctly British flavor — like "Dr. Who" or "Blake's 7" with better special effects.



If you're looking for a good game of PC pinball, *Pro Pinball: Timeshock!* was made for you. With its high-resolution, high-color graphics and realistic sounds, it's as close as you can get to the real thing.

Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

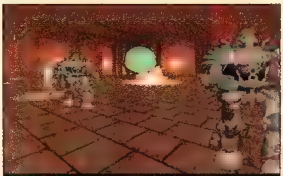
Empire Interactive • (800) 216 9706
www.empire-us.com

What better holiday gift for someone getting a new computer than a game they already know how to play? *Pro Pinball: Timeshock!* is the sequel to the fantastic *Pro Pinball: The Web*, and it's an even more realistic and addictive simulation of a classic arcade machine than the original. Unlike some other PC pinball packages, *Timeshock!* only simulates a single table, but it does it with unsurpassed authenticity. The game even comes with a manual for customizing the *Timeshock!* table's features that reads just like the one your neighborhood pizza parlor got when it bought the real pinball machine that's eaten so many of your quarters. *Timeshock!* is so believable, you can almost smell the beer and pepperoni. And since you never have to go to the cashier for more change, you may find yourself playing it into the wee hours.

Realms of the Haunting

Interplay • (800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

Oboy, did this game catch us by surprise. We'd hardly heard anything about it when it was released in the UK, and Interplay published it here with little fanfare. The graphics were nothing to write home about, and it looked at first glance like another 3D shoot-'em-up with some adventure-game touches. What *Realms of the Haunting* turned out to be was one of the best



Realms of the Haunting was one of 1997's nicest surprises — a truly original, engrossing, and entertaining action adventure.

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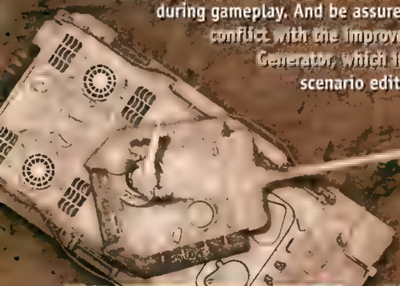

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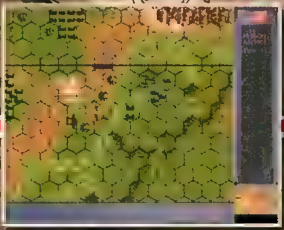

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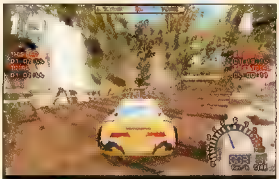
Product Information Number 327

first-person adventure games since *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock*. Unspectacular graphics aside (actually, some of them are quite pretty when you get deeper into the game), this is an utterly absorbing and entertaining action-adventure set in a wholly original, truly creepy world that deftly mixes fantasy and horror. If you're looking for something special, *Realms of the Haunting* is it.



If your system has the horsepower to handle it, you can run *Screamer 2* in high-res SVGA with 65,000 colors instead of the usual 256.

Screamer 2

Virgin Interactive • (714) 833-8710
www.vie.com

Amazing graphics characterize this terrific arcade-style racing game — not just high-resolution graphics, mind you, but high-color as well. If you've got the hardware to run it, you can blow right past the traditional 256 colors and go for 65,000, making *Screamer 2* look as good or better than any racing game on your friends' PlayStations or Nintendo 64s. And *Screamer 2* is more than just another pretty race; it's also a lot of fun. It creates a real sense of speed and gives you excellent control over your car, letting you execute the perfectly-timed "power slides" you'll have to master in order to beat the very tough computer-driven cars. A "Garage" screen even lets you customize your car's performance by adjusting handling, tire pressure, and more.

Sega Rally PC

Sega • (415) 802-4400
www.sega.com

Here's another excellent racing game; along with *Moto Racer* and *Screamer 2*, *Sega Rally PC* completes the hat trick that made 1997 a great year for arcade-style speedsters. A faithful reproduction of the coin-op smash, *Sega Rally PC* sports gorgeous graphics, fast action, and smooth control — plus the bizarre voice-overs that gave the arcade version a kind of quirky charm. Best of all, there's multi-player action: a split-screen mode for two players on the same computer; network support; and even some surprisingly smooth support for Internet play let you race against friends — who may or may not present a bigger challenge than the extremely talented AI drivers in the single-player mode.

Shadows Over Riva

Sir-tech Software • (315) 393-6633
www.sir-tech.com

This long-awaited final chapter in the popular *Realms of Arkania* trilogy is a hard-core role-playing gamer's dream. With tons of character statistics to keep track of, an intricate magic system, a turn-based tactical combat system, and a huge, rich setting, *Shadows Over Riva* is every bit the equal of a pen-and-paper RPG — but it has conveniences you could only find in a computer game. There's a handy automap, and a diary that automatically keeps track of the people you meet, the clues you find, and the quests you embark on — and even lets you search for clues by keywords. If you enjoyed the award-winning *Star Trail*, you'll definitely find the sequel to your liking — and you'll appreciate *Riva*'s improved graphics. This is the game for serious computer roleplaying fans.

SkyNET

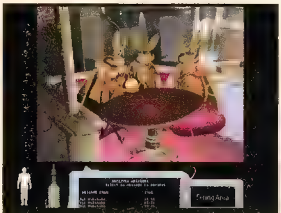
Bethesda Softworks • (301) 926-8300
www.bethsoft.com

This sequel to the excellent *Terminator: Future Shock* takes you back to the ruined future world of the Terminator flicks for some harrowing first-person action. Eight big, sprawling levels pit you against the monster SkyNET computer as you attempt to thwart its plan to launch a nuclear missile and wipe out the last dregs of humanity. On top of the all-new missions is another significant feature that *Future Shock* left out — multi-player action. *SkyNET* lets you shoot it out with friends as a human or a Terminator, even hopping into jeeps or hunter-killer aircraft (remember those from the movies?) to do battle in style. For a stand-alone game with this much value, *SkyNET* is a steal at around 20 bucks.

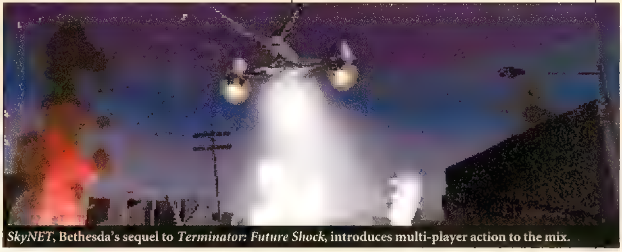
The Space Bar

SegaSoft • (888) 734-2763
www.segasoft.com

Beginning with Infocom in the heyday of text adventures, Steve Meretzky has been responsible for some of the funniest, most entertaining computer adventures ever created. *The Space Bar* is another winner from this prolific designer; it's a quirky science fiction adventure that casts you in the role of a company detective charged with the task of tracking down a desperate criminal. You'll go to a seedy bar called the Thirsty Tentacle, where your talent for telepathy will let you interrogate a cast of extraterrestrials and bug-eyed monsters by reliving their memories. This isn't another puzzle game masquerading as an adventure, this is the real thing, created by a master of the art.



The Space Bar tosses you into an alien pub and challenges you to solve a mystery by reliving the memories of its extraterrestrial patrons.



SkyNET, Bethesda's sequel to *Terminator: Future Shock*, introduces multi-player action to the mix.

Spaceward Ho! IV

New World Computing • (800) 336-3506
www.nwcomputing.com

Spaceward Ho! is a game of galactic conquest with a personality all its own. Simplicity is the watchword; you won't find the kind of depth and micromanagement here that you'll encounter in *Stars!* or the Master of Orion games. Instead, you'll get a game that's incredibly easy to learn, but nearly as difficult to master as the more complex space strategy games. *Spaceward Ho!* is fiendishly addictive; it's customizable enough that no two games are ever the same; and it has multi-player features galore. Don't let its simple graphics or its bizarre Wild-West theme turn you off; if you enjoy games of galactic warfare and you're looking for something light to play with a friend, look no further.

Stars!

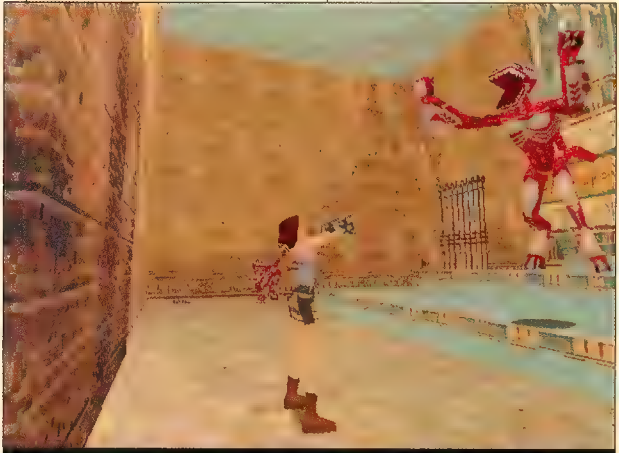
Empire Interactive • (800) 216 9706
www.empire-us.com

Although it works as a single-player game, *Stars!* really shines in multi-player mode. And the more players, the merrier; *Stars!* lets as many as 16 gamers go at it via local-area network, the Internet, or even E-mail, and a single game can last weeks. *Stars!* represents the other end of the spectrum from *Spaceward Ho!* — this is as complex (and, sometimes, complicated) a game of galactic conquest as you'll find. But fear not: it also has an amazingly rich and detailed tutorial that walks you hands-on through every aspect of the game. If you're a fan of Internet and electronic bulletin-board space strategy games like *Tradewars* or *VGA Planets*, then *Stars!* is right up your alley.

Tomb Raider

Eidos Interactive • (415) 616-2022
www.eidos.com

This is the game that started it all — the action adventure that introduced us to Lara Croft, the acrobatic, intrepid adventurer who has become such a celebrity in her own right that she's gone on tour with U2, been featured in a British fashion magazine, and even appeared on the cover of a certain PC gaming magazine. Not bad for a woman made entirely of pixels. If you haven't played *Tomb Raider* yet, it's time to find out the real secret of Lara's success — she was lucky enough to star in a terrific PC game, surrounded by stunning graphics, diabolically designed levels, and plenty of lead-slinging action. *Tomb Raider* succeeds in about every way possible.

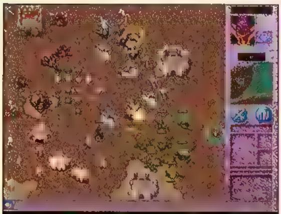


Even from behind, you can't help but recognize her — it's Lara Croft, the charming and deadly young heroine of *Tomb Raider*, the award-winning 3D action game from Core Design and Eidos.

Triple Play 98

EA Sports • (800) 245-4525
www.easports.com

It seems like nobody does action-oriented sports games better than the folks at EA Sports; their NHL and FIFA Soccer titles in particular are masterpieces in the field. EA Sports finally turned its talents to baseball last year with *Triple Play 97* and scored a major hit; *Triple Play 98* is even better. With an emphasis on action, it sports detailed 3D players, fluid animations, seamless play-by-play and color commentary by two (count 'em, two) announcers — and, of course, EA Sports' trademark Virtual Stadium. If you're a freak for baseball games that accurately track tons of real-world stats, you may find *Triple Play 98* lacking — but give it a try, anyway. It may just remind you of what made you fall in love with baseball in the first place.

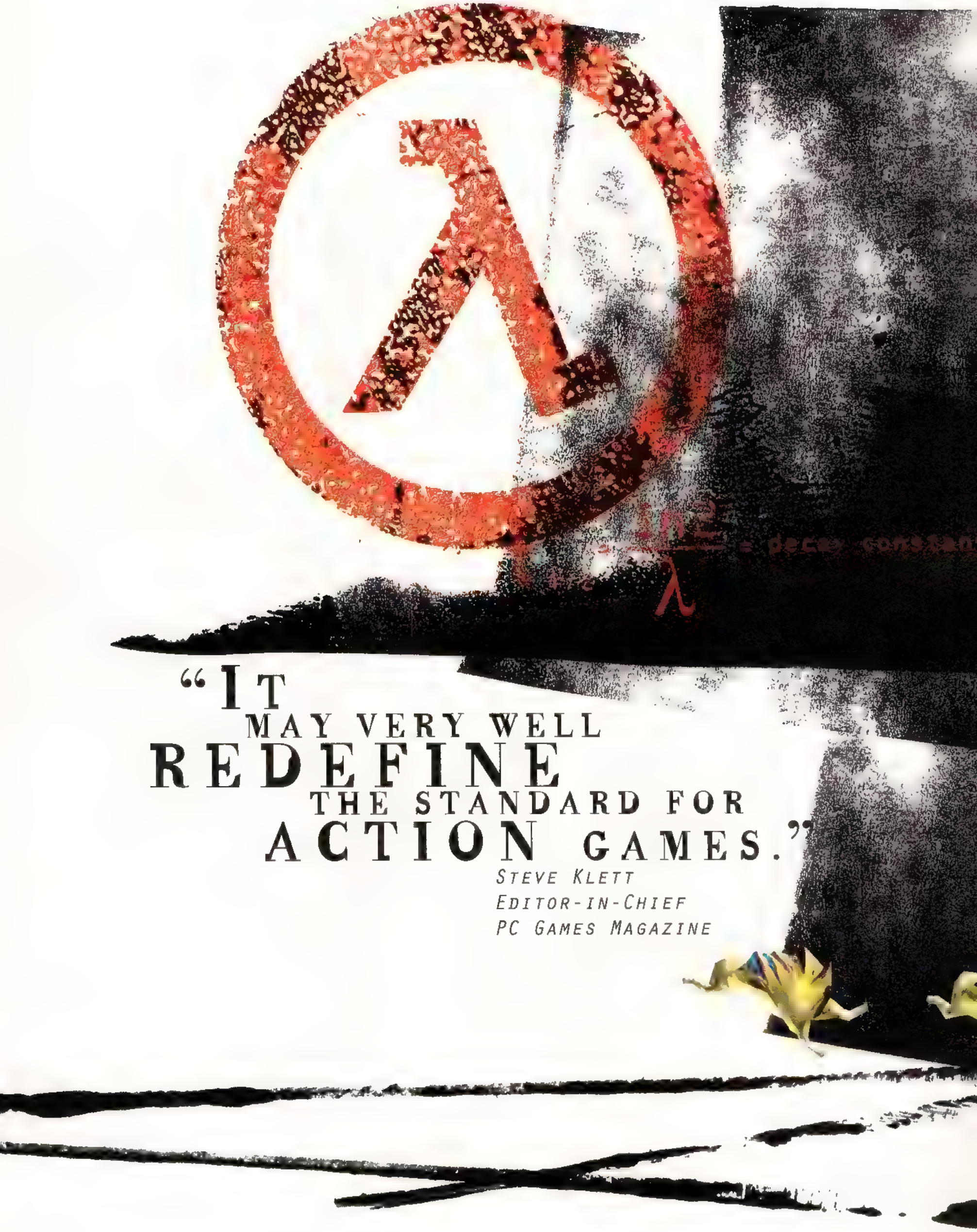


SSI's *War Wind* is a deep, addictive real-time strategy game that deserves a lot more attention than it received.

War Wind

SSI • (888) 808-4311
www.ssionline.com

War Wind is a real-time strategy game that never really got its due; sure, we gave it an Editors' Choice rating, but we'll always feel that this game didn't get nearly the attention from gamers that it deserved. More than just another me-too product nipping at the heels of the WarCraft and Command & Conquer games, *War Wind* took the real-time strategy formula and added new tactical and strategic options, four different races, and the ability to carry your best troops from one mission to the next, watching them develop into formidable heroes. *War Wind* did just well enough to inspire a sequel that may well be out in time for the holidays — but if you love real-time strategy games, you owe it to yourself to try out the original.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"It may very well REDEFINE the standard for ACTION games."

Steve Klett
Editor-in-Chief
PC Games Magazine

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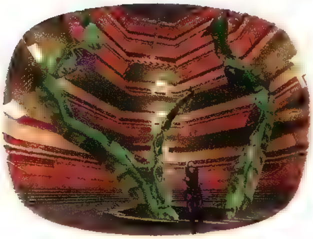
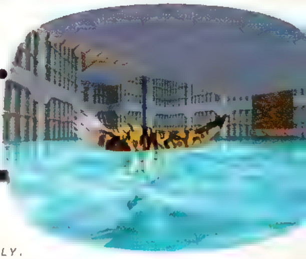
SIERRA

STERNUM.



SHE'S SMART,
HAS A GREAT PERSONALITY,
AND KNOWS THAT THE WAY TO A
MAN'S HEART
IS THROUGH HIS
STERNUM.



SHE'S A TRAINED GOVERNMENT ASSASSIN WHOSE ONLY GOAL IS TO SILENCE YOU— PERMANENTLY. AND YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF PLACES TO HIDE.

THINK THE ONLY OPPONENTS WORTH FIGHTING ARE THOSE YOU MEET IN A DEATHMATCH? THINK AGAIN. WITH HALF-LIFE'S ADVANCED CHARACTER AI, YOU'LL BATTLE ENEMIES SO SMART, YOU'LL SWEAR THEY'RE ALIVE. THEY'LL TAKE COVER, RECRUIT OTHERS AND WORK TOGETHER TO BRING YOU DOWN.

AND THE REALISM DOESN'T STOP THERE. THINGS ACT, LOOK AND SOUND LIKE THEY DO IN THE REAL WORLD. WE COULD FILL YOUR HEAD WITH TERMS LIKE 16-BIT COLOR, FULL-SPECTRUM LIGHTING, DSP SOUND, AND SKELETAL ANIMATION. WHAT IT ALL MEANS TO YOU IS A GAME SO REAL, SO UNPREDICTABLE, SO ALIVE, YOU'LL SWEAR IT HAS A PULSE. ADD A 3D CARD AND YOUR OWN PULSE WILL RACE. CREATE CUSTOM LEVELS WITH WORLDCRAFT 2.0 (INCLUDED). OF COURSE THERE ARE MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS— FOR UP TO 32 PLAYERS. BUT HOW MANY OF YOUR FRIENDS ARE AS BEAUTIFUL AS SHE IS, OR AS DEADLY?

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HALF-LIFE

Product Information Number 310

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Mac
INTERNET GAMING ZONE

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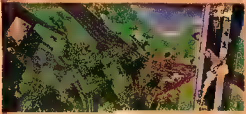
Getting ~~yourself~~ your men surrounded is very bad for morale.



ARNHEM
Doetinchem
Driel
Elst
Nijmegen

"Look ol' boy, ignore everything I say and you'll do smashingly."

To do in Holland: smell tulips, admire windmills, secure bridgehead.

mortar or flamethrowers...
mortar or flamethrowers...

Unless
of course
you want
to win.

You took the bridge yesterday. That doesn't mean you'll have it today.

Nothing cleans out a town quite like flamethrowers.

Too tired to march?

Cozy up in an empty blast crater.

CLOSE COMBAT
A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Operation Market Garden was Field Marshal Montgomery's brilliant über-plan to send the Nazis scampering back to Berlin once and for all. And even though it began with the largest airdrop in military history, it ended up a complete and bloody failure. Maybe you can do better. With the right amount of strategic brilliance you can take the fifth and final bridge that Monty so unfortunately missed. It's simple. Recreate history and you will fail. Rewrite it and well, anything's possible. **www.microsoft.com/games/closecombat**

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PREVIEWS

So many hot new PC games released over the holidays, but so little time… here's a whistle-stop tour of some of the bigger-name titles vying for your holiday bucks this year.

Inevitably, not every game you'll see on the shelves this festive season made it to us in time for review this issue, so here's our traditional round-up of some of those games. These are the ones we predict will be well worth looking out for…

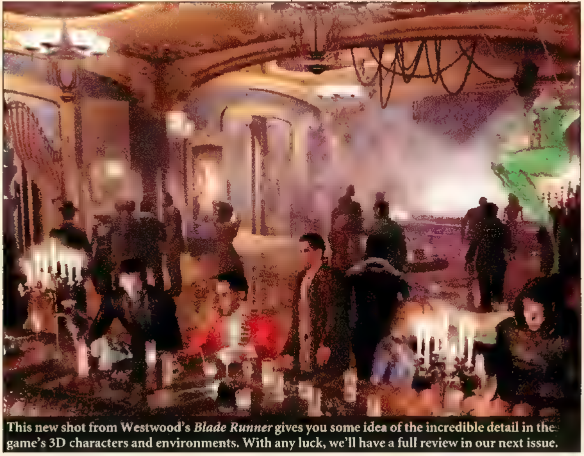
Blade Runner

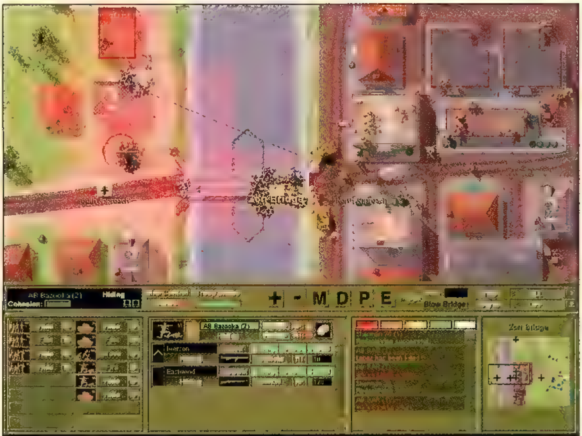
Westwood Studios/Virgin • (800) 874-4607
www.westwood.com

Ever since *PC Gamer*'s exclusive first preview of this long-awaited movie license game back in September, gamers have been itching to get their hands on it. It's understandable — it's taking 17 years for a computer translation of Ridley Scott's science fiction classic to arrive, and even the skeptics and purists are being forced to admit that Westwood's elaborate effort looks like it might just pull off the impossible and do justice to one of the most imaginative and influential sci-fi movies of all time.

Westwood is pushing back the PC's technological boundaries with this one, offering painstakingly created 3D backdrops around which the "camera" can move to create dynamic animated scenes, and voxel-based motion captured characters with their own intelligent behavior patterns. The team's goal is to create the same convincing sense of a living, breathing Los Angeles in the year 2019 as the movie did, and from what Westwood has shown us so far, it's looking like they've done just that.

This is Westwood's most movie-like production yet, using more than 100 professional actors, including many members of the movie's original cast (among them are Sean Young, Brion James, James Hong, Joe Turkel, and William Sanderson). No Harrison Ford though, so players take on the role of Ray McCoy, another Blade Runner working on a case that runs parallel to the events


This new shot from Westwood's *Blade Runner* gives you some idea of the incredible detail in the game's 3D characters and environments. With any luck, we'll have a full review in our next issue.



Holland, 1944: Montgomery's men storm across Nazi-controlled territory in an attempt to end World War Two in one decisive stroke. In *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far*, you can make it happen.

depicted in the movie.

Blade Runner's expansive graphical world occupies four CD-ROMs and is expected to arrive on shelves — barring any delays — in the coming month.

Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far

Microsoft • (800) 429-9400
www.microsoft.com

Microsoft's first wave of titles that launched its new games label last year was a mixed bag, but undoubtedly the one real standout among them was *Close Combat*, a real-time wargame that brought the player closer to the brutal horror and realities of close-quarter warfare than ever before. It deservedly won *PC Gamer*'s award for 1996's Wargame of the Year, and now developer Atomic Games is going all-out to repeat that success with a bigger, more ambitious sequel.

After the original *Close Combat*'s simulation of the D-Day landings at Normandy, the sequel switches attention to 1944 Holland and the Allies' Operation Market Garden in which Field Marshall Montgomery attempted to wrestle control of five crucial bridges from the hands of the Nazis.

This sequel retains much of the same gameplay as the original, including the real-time play and realistic troop behavior, but also includes some major changes and additions in response to user feedback. A new strategic-level aspect allows you to command the entire campaign rather than just individual battles, while the Battlemaker feature can be used to create your own "what-if?" scenarios. And, of course, there's full multi-play through modem, network, and on the Internet via Microsoft's fast-growing Internet Gaming Zone.

The final version of *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* arrived at the *PC Gamer* offices just too late for review, but it should be on retail shelves by the time you read this, and we'll have a full review in our next issue.

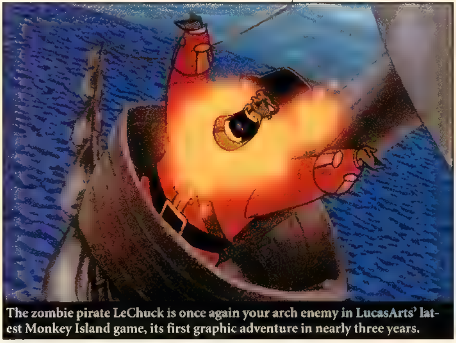
The Curse of Monkey Island

LucasArts • (800) 782-7927
www.lucasarts.com

The long-awaited and much-anticipated third installment in LucasArts' rip-roaring series of pirate comedies is also the company's first foray into its bedrock genre since 1995's *The Dig*. It seems that time has been well spent, as *The Curse of Monkey Island* looks like no other LucasArts adventure. If anything, it looks like a full animated movie, such is the quality of the beautifully drawn high-res characters and backdrops.

As before, the game follows the adventures of hapless would-be pirate Guybrush Threepwood and his running battle with the evil ghost pirate LeChuck. This time around, Guybrush's latest mishap with a cursed magical ring has turned his beloved Elaine Marley to gold and allowed her to fall into LeChuck's hands. On the quest to get her back, the player will encounter plenty of characters and locations familiar from the previous two Monkey Island games, along with plenty of new ones added to expand the game universe. As always, the emphasis is placed firmly on humor, with more situational comedy worked into the story line than ever before.

A new interface, full voice dialog (a first for a Monkey Island game), and some astounding cinematics are among the features to be found here. LucasArts veterans Larry Ahern and Jonathan Ackley, in charge of the project, are promising that the game will appeal to fans of the series and newcomers alike. Many adventurers won't have visited the world of Monkey Island before, but even if they haven't, the arrival of this game is big news for the genre — LucasArts' work has long been considered the state of the art in the graphical adventure realm, and with the genre currently in a state of stagnation, this could be just the shot in the arm it needs. Look for *The Curse of Monkey Island* to be in stores later this month.



The zombie pirate LeChuck is once again your arch enemy in LucasArts' latest Monkey Island game, its first graphic adventure in nearly three years.

Category: A Christmas Case History

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Q: If Santa Claus developed a "Bipolar Disorder," how might he behave on Christmas Eve?

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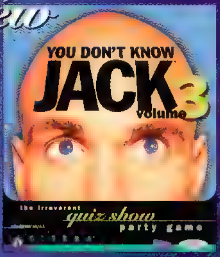
YOU DON'T KNOW
JACK
volume 3
the irreverent
quiz show
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www.lucasarts.com

The software in this collection is rated K-A to TEEN by the ESRB.

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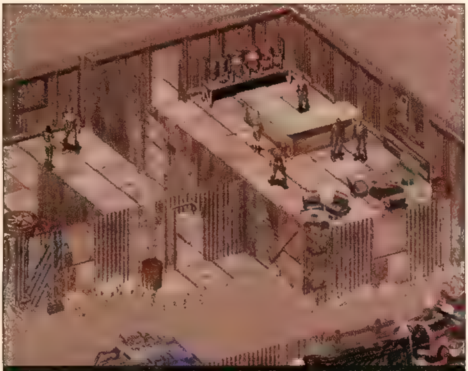
Product Information Number 223



High-res isometric graphics combine with a killer soundtrack and a deep quest to make *Fallout* one of the standout roleplaying contenders for 1997.

Fallout

Interplay • (800) 969-GAME
www.interplay.com

Back in the late 1980s, Interplay set a new benchmark for computer roleplaying with the classic *Wasteland*, a gritty futuristic RPG set in the burned-out deserts of post-apocalyptic America. It's taken some time for a follow-up to arrive, and although *Fallout* isn't officially dubbed as such, it is undoubtedly the spiritual sequel to *Wasteland*.

The game is set in the 21st Century, long after global thermonuclear war has reduced civilization to ashes. Those who survived the apocalypse did so by holing up in gargantuan vaults deep underground, living safely there ever since — until now. The time has come to venture topside, and guess who's just been volunteered?

Fallout is a massive game, set in and around the scarred desert wastelands that now make up much of America. What starts out as a simple mission to find a water-purifying chip soon pans out into a massive quest to save the world — or what's left of it, at least. Presented in a forced isometric perspective a la *Diablo*, *Fallout* has all the traditional roleplaying elements — you'll construct a character, then watch him or her evolve in experience and skills as you meet, deal, trade, and fight with an assortment of unsavory characters. It's a solo quest rather than a party-based game, although non-player characters will occasionally join you to help you kick some mutant butt.

Boasting beautiful and imaginative retro-future art direction, *Fallout* has already hooked many members of the *PC Gamer* staff who have been toying with a near-final version of the game, and the prognosis is that this could be one of the biggest roleplaying events since *Diablo*. *Fallout* is in the stores now, and there's a full review planned for our January 1997 issue.

The Golf Pro

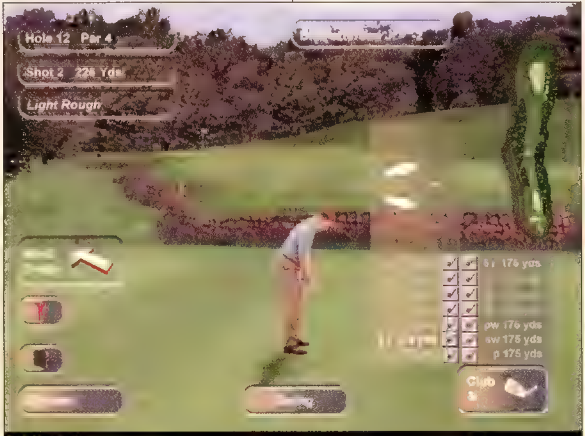
Empire Interactive • (415) 439-4854
www.empire-us.com

In the quiet after a stormy summer for competing golf *sims (PGA Tour Pro, Links LS, Jack Nicklaus 4,* and *Front Page Sports Golf 98* all fought it out for the same niche market), along comes Empire Interactive with its offering, and an original one it is too.

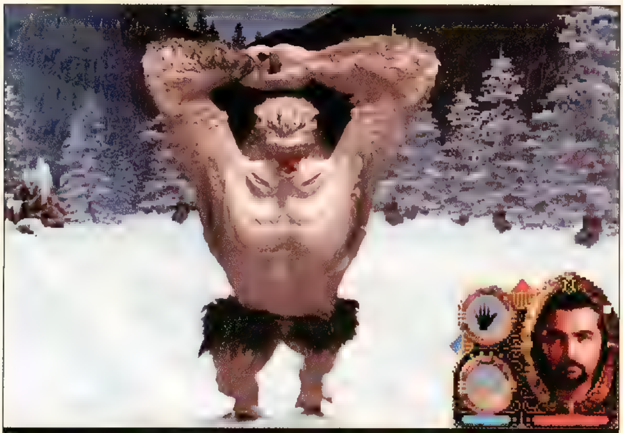
The Golf Pro has a couple of original features to set it apart from the crowd. First, it eschews the tried-and-tested three-click swing method in favor of a more dynamic mouse control mode similar to the TrueSwing system pioneered by Sierra in this year's *Front Page Sports Golf*. The added twist is that the player emulates the golf swing by sweeping the mouse horizontally rather than vertically — Empire says that this system is more instinctive and similar to the sensation of a real golf shot than Sierra's approach.

The other new feature is to be found in the background graphics. Even the genre leader *Links LS* takes time to draw the screen before each new shot, but *The Golf Pro* sidesteps this by using pre-rendered views rather than creating them on the fly. There are hundreds of pre-set views to cover virtually every position you could hit the ball from. An interesting side-effect of this is that the golfer isn't always centrally positioned on-screen — he or she may be off to the side, giving a view of the action previously unseen in a golf simulation.

The game comes with two courses, Hilton Head National in the U.S. and St. Mellion in the U.K., and was produced with the input of Gary Player, who also appears motion-captured as an in-game player and instructional aid. All the other features we've come to expect (TV-style commentary,



The innovative and painstaking way in which Empire Interactive has rendered the courses in *The Golf Pro* gives the game a lavish look that could even rival the visuals in *Links LS 98*.



This snowy beast is one of the many ornery critters you'll face while questing in *Lands of Lore II: Guardians of Destiny.* Westwood's return to the roleplaying arena has RPG fans slavering in anticipation.

Internet play, etc.) are in there too. *The Golf Pro* is scheduled to be released in the coming month, so keep an eye out for it.

Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny

Westwood Studios/Virgin • (800) 874-4607
www.westwood.com

The roleplaying revival predicted in our October issue begins in earnest with Westwood's return to its RPG roots. This sequel to the original *Lands of Lore* got here just too late for review this issue, but our resident rune-juggler Mike Wolf has been playing into the wee small hours since it arrived.

Reminiscent of Origin's classic Ultima Underworld games or even Interplay's *Realms Of The Haunting, Lands Of Lore II* is a first-person 3D romp that actually leans more towards adventure than traditional roleplaying. You don't, for example, get to choose or create your character, but the game does give you a pretty interesting alter-ego — a human that can transform at will into a monstrous beast or small rodent-like creature. This shape-shifting skill, like many others you can collect along the way, comes in handy for navigating the environment and character-based puzzles the game throws at you.

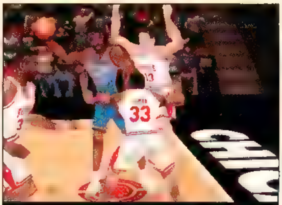
After spending what seems like forever in development, *Lands Of Lore II* arrives as an ambitious product indeed on four CD-ROMs featuring some of the most elaborate cinematic sequences yet seen. But what of the game? It remains to be seen if Westwood has lived up to its own excellent reputation with this one, but our full review next issue will answer all your questions. In the meantime, *Lands Of Lore II: Guardians Of Destiny* in on the shelves now.

NBA Live 98

Electronic Arts • (800) 245-4525
www.easports.com

EA Sports makes the best basketball games on the PC, and its latest yearly update, *NBA Live 98*, shows every indication of continuing that trend. Following the example set by *NHL 98, NBA Live 98* comes pumped up with 3Dfx support, giving it a huge graphical boost that makes it by far the best-looking game in this graphically excellent series. More than 350 NBA players' faces have been modelled and mapped onto the polygonal players, so you'll actually be able to recognize many of your favorite stars (look out for some jazzy new hairstyles on the Bulls' Dennis Rodman, although Michael Jordan, as usual, remains absent; even his jersey number has been retired).

Aside from the technical innovations, the features in *NBA Live 98* will for the most part be familiar to fans of the previous games.



The 3Dfx-enhanced visuals on display in *NBA Live 98* make this EA Sports' best-looking hoops game yet. Keep an eye out for this one.

The presentation is now a little more TV-like, thanks to closer licensing ties between EA and the Turner Network, so the games are now shown with all the "NBA on TNT" trappings, including two-man booth commentary from Ernie Johnson, Jr. and Verne Lundquist. There's also a new bonus game mode, a Three-Point Shootout tournament based on the NBA's just-for-fun midseason competition.

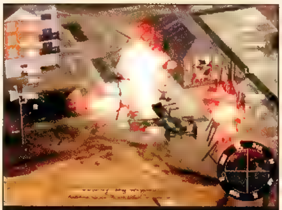
EA Sports' traditional ultra-hip NBA presentation has been cranked up yet another notch, and all in all it looks pretty certain that this is going to be the hoops game to beat going into 1998. Keep your eyes peeled for a full review in the next issue.

Nuclear Strike

Electronic Arts • (800) 245-4525
www.ea.com

Desert Strike, Jungle Strike, Urban Strike, Soviet Strike… Electronic Arts' line of highly popular helicopter action games keeps on getting bigger and better, but curiously the last two never made it onto the PC from the console versions. But now the series is back with a vengeance with the PlayStation port of this, the fifth Strike game in the series.

Echoing a theme popular with techno-



You can use an A-10 Thunderbolt to deliver justice American-style in EA's lush *Nuclear Strike.*

Continued on page 118

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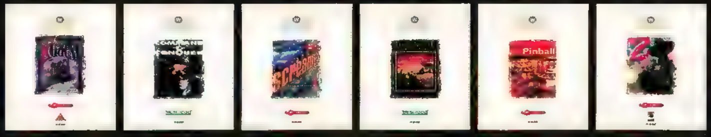

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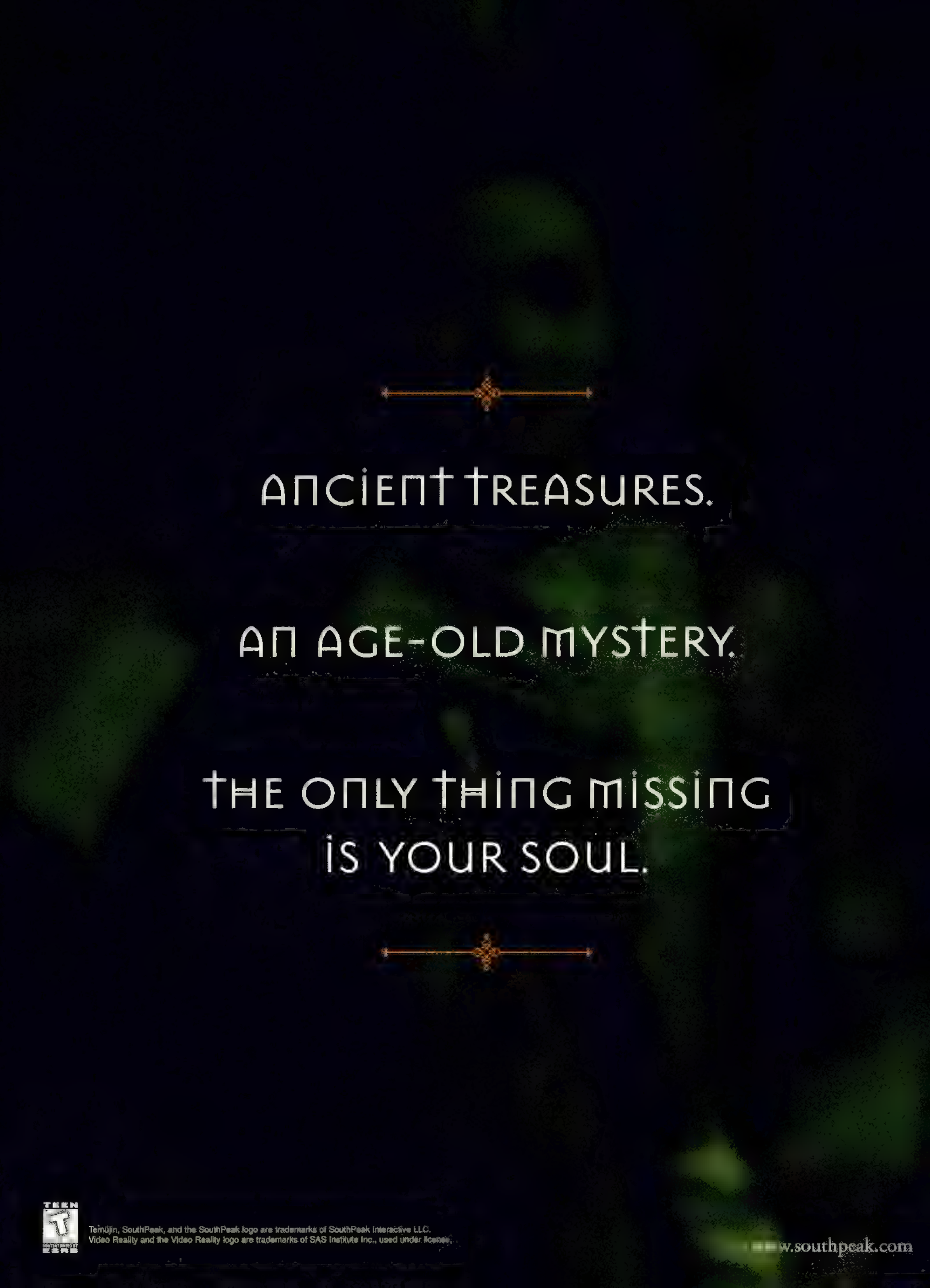
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thriller authors this year, *Nuclear Strike* poses a "what-if?" scenario in which Southeast Asian terrorists have gotten their hands on some very nasty nuclear toys and plan to use them against Uncle Sam. As before, it's up to you to step into the cockpit of the latest state-of-the-art attack chopper and dish out some tough love to these misguided miscreants.

The Strike series has matured a lot since PC gamers last saw it, boasting dynamic 3D landscapes made all the more impressive by 3Dfx support. And you'll control more than just helicopters — there are 15 vehicles to pilot, including tanks, mobile rocket launchers, jet fighters, and a hovercraft. The jungles of Southeast Asia can be viewed at varying resolutions to suit your machine's specs, from as low as 320x240 to a screen-sizzling 1024x768 high-res mode.

Early versions of *Nuclear Strike* have kept several *PC Gamer* staff members' trigger fingers blistering into the wee small hours, and the game should be in stores by the time you read this. Watch for a review next month.

Quake II

Activision • (800) 477-3650
www.activision.com

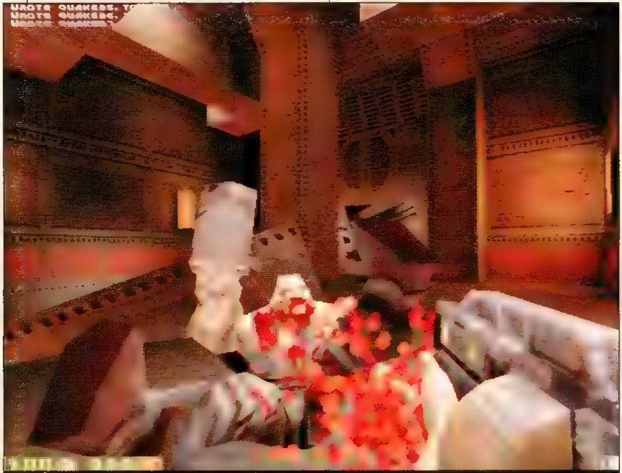
Unquestionably the most eagerly awaited game of 1997, *Quake II* stands a serious chance of also being the best of the year. John Carmack and his team at id Software have not rested on their laurels in the creation of this, the sequel to one of the biggest, most influential PC games ever.

Quake II comes with a whole new graphics engine boasting colored lighting and all kinds of other visual trickery, improved creature AI, a new weapons rack, male and female heroes, expanded DeathMatch functionality and, of course, more gore than ever before.

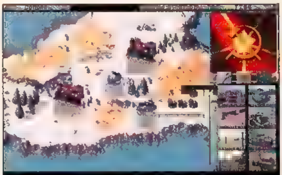
Recognizing the shortfalls of the original, *Quake II*'s focus will be on the single-player game, with more deviously designed maps and a fully rounded story to bring the episodes together and make the whole game seem more cohesive overall. And, as part of a recently minted deal, White Zombie will provide a song exclusively for the game's soundtrack, which can be no bad thing.

For once, id isn't saying that its latest game will be ready "when it's finished," and promises that *Quake II* will be on the shelves in time for the holidays — which will, of course, please Activision, who paid big bucks for the rights to this blockbuster.

For more information, check out the epic 14-page preview in our October 1997 issue. Apart from that, all you (and we) can do is wait…



Does any game have what it takes to stand up to *Quake II* this holiday season? The id Software sequel looks primed to emerge as the best of the new 3D games, but we'll have to wait a while longer to find out for sure.



Tesla Tanks, Missile Subs, and Shock Troopers are among the new units giving a powerful boost to *Red Alert* players in *The Aftermath.*

Red Alert: The Aftermath

Westwood Studios/Virgin • (800) 874-4607
www.westwood.com

Yes, it's "only" an expansion pack, but they don't get much bigger than this. The last add-on disc *for Command & Conquer: Red Alert, Counterstrike*, sold an unprecedented 100,000 copies, and *The Aftermath* offers a lot more, including a slew of new units for both the Allied and Soviet sides to play with, 100 new multi-player maps (including 25 "Mega Maps" almost twice the size than the old "Large" maps), 18 new single-player missions, and a new soundtrack comprising of eight specially composed songs.

Some might say that many of these features should have been in *Counterstrike* to begin with, and that to release *The Aftermath* is a sign of Westwood trying to squeeze just a little too much cash out of one its most successful titles ever. Others will just be happy to be getting exactly what they want — a new lease of life for what is still, in our view, the best real-time strategy game out there.

Red Alert: The Aftermath is on sale now, and Tom McDonald will be giving it the once-over in his Extended Play column next month. In addition, we're planning to have a complete walkthrough for the new campaigns.

Seven Kingdoms

Interactive Magic • (888) 746-2442
www.imagicgames.com

Just about every PC game publisher out there seems to think it would be financially imprudent to go into this year's big buying season without a real-time strategy game in its festive line-up — there are more new games to choose from in this genre than in any other this holiday. *Seven Kingdoms* is Interactive Magic's offering in this most crowded of arenas, but promises more than just the average *Command & Conquer* or *WarCraft II* knock-off.

Seven Kingdoms touts itself as more a game of empire-building, diplomacy, and espionage than all-out battle (although combat does play a big part). Players can assume the role of the Chinese, Persians, Japanese, Greeks, Normans, Vikings, or Mayans as they attempt to build an empire to outlive up to six human or computer-controlled opponents. Subterfuge and business savvy are the orders of the day as you attempt to build a flourishing economy through smart trading, while sending spies into the enemy ranks to keep a close eye on what they're up to. In one of the game's more fantastic features, players who earn the favor of the game's all-powerful Gods can call upon them to curse and smite their enemies.

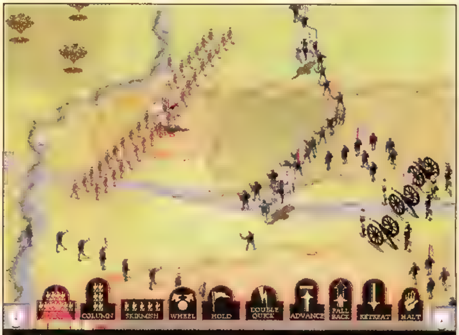
If *Seven Kingdoms* succeeds, it could be just what strategy gamers have been looking for, but have not yet been properly treated to — a successful mix of the game styles encompassing the broad scope of *Civilization*, and the intense tactical combat of *WarCraft II*. We'll find out next month when we should have a full review of the game, but in the meantime *Seven Kingdoms* should hit retail shelves during the coming month.

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

Electronic Arts • (800) 245-4525
www.ea.com

Do we really want another Civil War game? Well, when it's written by the best game designer in the business and looks as good as this one, yes we do, thanks very much!

After creating some of the most influential turn-based strategy games ever, including *Railroad Tycoon* and *Civilization*, Sid Meier's first venture at his new development company, Firaxis Games, is a bold move away from his roots and into real-time territory. His input could be just what the historical wargame genre needs — a game style known for its stuffiness, bland looks, and inaccessibility to novices could be reborn with *Gettysburg!*, a simulation that presents the most famous and epic battle of the Civil War with all the polish of the best-looking real-time strategy games, but with much more depth.



In *Sid Meier's Gettysburg!*, the Civil War's most famous battle comes to life on computer like never before, thanks to the PC's most celebrated designer.

Assuming command of either the Confederate armies or the Yankees, players can fight any of the individual scenarios that made up Gettysburg, or bite the bullet and play out the entire thing, one scenario at a time. There's also an invaluable tutorial mode to get you familiarized with the weapons and tactics of the time, and multi-play modes that allow players to batter the hell out of each other or team up against the computer.

Dripping in atmosphere, with lush graphics and the authentic sounds of the battlefield, *Gettysburg!* could turn out to be Meier's best work yet. His biggest fans are already finding out for themselves, since the game is on store shelves now. You can read our verdict in the full review planned for next issue.

The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield

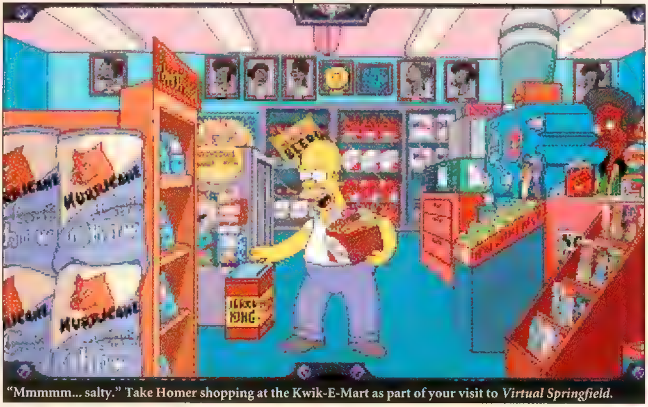
Fox Interactive • (310) 369-3900
www.foxinteractive.com

Being marketed by Fox as more of a "software toy" than a game itself, *The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield* should nevertheless hold plenty of fun for die-hard fans of the show.

Although previous attempts to bring The Simpsons to PC screens have proved less than successful, *Virtual Springfield* is by far Fox's most ambitious effort to date, recreating the Simpson family's home town in full, explorable 3D inside your computer. You can wander around at your leisure, and visit some of the more famous locations, such as Moe's Tavern, the high school, power plant, and the Noiseland arcade. At each location, you might be treated to anything from a comedy cartoon cut-scene to an interactive environment or even a set of arcade mini-games.

There's plenty for Simpsons buffs to like, including all-new *Itchy & Scratchy* cartoons, a never-before-seen McBain movie, and clips from Homer's favorite TV shows. You'll meet all the show's regular characters too, complete with new dialog recorded by the cast.

An early version of *Virtual Springfield* we played with was certainly a fun



"Mmmmm... salty." Take Homer shopping at the Kwik-E-Mart as part of your visit to *Virtual Springfield*.

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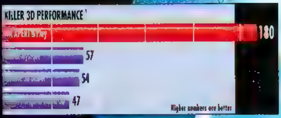

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Alpha Blending/Fog	●		●
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DVD-Quality Video	●		
2D Acceleration (Win 95)	120M	103M	n/a

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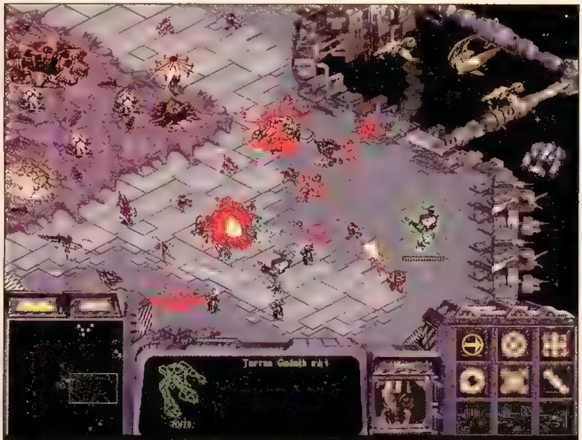


The most eagerly awaited real-time strategy game of 1997 is now almost upon us, as Blizzard puts the finishing touches to its interstellar war epic *StarCraft*.

diversion, if a little limited — it's more an interactive tinker-toy than a full-blown game. If anything, it's a little like *Myst* meets The Simpsons, which, depending on your gaming tastes, could be a very good thing indeed.

StarCraft

Blizzard Entertainment • (800) 953-SNOW
www.blizzard.com

Undoubtedly one of the most anticipated titles of this (or any other) year, *StarCraft* is shaping up to be something very big indeed. Well, what else would we expect from the company that brought us such classics as *WarCraft II* and *Diablo*?

When it was first announced two years ago, many people expected a straight "*WarCraft* in Space" deal, but it's clear to those who have been monitoring its development that *StarCraft* is evolving into much more than that. Boasting an all-new forced-perspective isometric graphics engine and strategy dependent upon which of the three eclectic races you play, *StarCraft* is certainly more ambitious than the majority of the "me-too" real-time cash-in games that have been rushed to market this holiday season.

The key to *StarCraft*'s innovation lies in the design of the three warring races. Unlike *WarCraft II*, the different armies are not composed of like-for-like units with different graphics — each has its own unique style, with different units, technologies, and fighting styles. The humans use familiar military units and tactics, for instance, while the alien Protoss are capable of creating shields and weapons from pure energy. Add the evil Zerg to the mix, with their bio-engineered weapons and living hives that spawn new units, and you've got a three-way rumble far more complex than most previous games in this genre have offered.

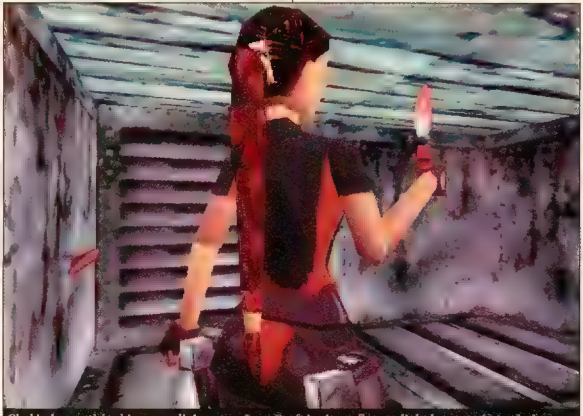
StarCraft is supposed to be released before the end of the year, but we still have not received a solid beta-test version, and after so long in development, it's possible the release date could slip again. However, hopes are high that, like last year's *Diablo*, it will make it into stores just before year's end.

Tomb Raider 2

Eidos Interactive • (415) 616-2022
www.eidosinteractive.com

Most predictable hit of the year, anyone? This time last holiday season *Tomb Raider* was *the* game, outselling everything else on the block and picking up armfuls of awards (including two from *PC Gamer*) in the process. One year later, here comes the inevitable, but nevertheless eagerly-awaited, sequel. Developer Core Design has been careful not to mess too much with a winning formula, so much of the original's play style has been retained here. Once again climbing into the hiking boots of stunning adventurer Lara Croft, you'll fight and puzzle your way through giant 3D environments from the Great Wall of China to the rusty wreck of a sunken cruise liner.

New for *Tomb Raider 2*: an expanded arsenal of weaponry and equipment, including a harpoon gun and flares used to light your way in darkened areas (made possible



Clad in her cool-looking new diving gear, Lara Croft ignites a flare to light her way through the murky recesses of an ancient shipwreck in *Tomb Raider 2*.

Ginger Lynn Allen and Mark Hamill are two familiar cast members returning for *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, although the game places less emphasis on cinematics and more on 3D action.

by the addition of new, dynamic lighting routines added to the game engine), and the chance to get behind the wheel of vehicles, including a speedboat and a snowmobile. And don't forget Lara's new features, including the ability to climb sheer walls, and a cool-looking new ponytail hairstyle.

Tomb Raider 2 will be shipping in time for the holidays with Direct3D-compatible accelerator support, with specific patches for individual cards on their way shortly after. And if this one isn't in the top five holiday sellers, we'll eat Coconut Monkey.

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Electronic Arts/Origin • (800) 245-4525
www.origin.ea.com

After the evolution of the Wing Commander series had seemed to reached a plateau with *Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom*, expectations for the fifth game in the series weren't that high — at least they weren't until Origin unveiled it at this year's E3 show, and it became apparent how much difference a new development team, and a new attitude, can make to a well-worn series. Origin is so keen to underscore the new direction being taken by this game that it refuses to call the game *Wing Commander V* — this, the company claims, is a fresh start for the franchise.

Wing Commander: Prophecy pushes the focus away from cinematics (although they are still there) and back toward gameplay, with more attention placed on mission design and speed. With that in mind, this is the first game in the main Wing Commander series to boast 3D accelerator support, and a full array of multi-play options. There's also a new fleet of fighter craft to fly from the deck of the giddyingly large carrier TCS Midway, and a frightening new bio-engineered alien race designed by futurist Syd Mead to replace the long-in-the-tooth Kilrathi.

If the eye-popping speed and intensity of the 3D gameplay sequences shown at E3 can make it into the final version, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* could be the best space combat yet, perhaps toppling even the awesome *TIE Fighter* from its perch. We'll find out soon enough, as the game is due to hit shelves in time for the holidays.

You Don't Know Jack Volume 3 and You Don't Know Jack Television

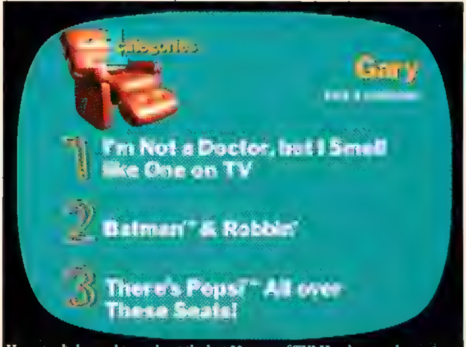
Berkeley Systems, Inc • (510) 540-5535
www.berksys.com

Well, it's party season, and nobody knows that better than the folks down at Berkeley Systems who are celebrating by serving up a double dose of the PC's best-loved party game, *You Don't Know Jack*.

The series that redefined computer trivia games with its irreverent style and glossy presentation is back with a third general-knowledge volume, and a Television spin-off to join its Sports- and Movies-themed titles. Both new games boast a Jack-standard 800 questions, along with some hip new features. *You Don't Know Jack Volume 3* ramps up the series' award-winning presentation style with newer, flashier graphics, introductions, and sound effects, and also offers new types of question rounds, like Dis Or Dat, Impossible Questions, ThreeWays, and "name-that-tune" Super Audio Questions. *You Don't Know Jack Television*, meanwhile, comes complete with somewhat cheesy TV-style presentation and questions spanning 50 years of television history.

Both of the new You Don't Know Jack games should be on sale now, along with a new bumper compilation pack entitled *You Don't Know Jack Huge XXXL* which includes volumes 1, 2, and 3 in a massive 2400-question compendium.

PCG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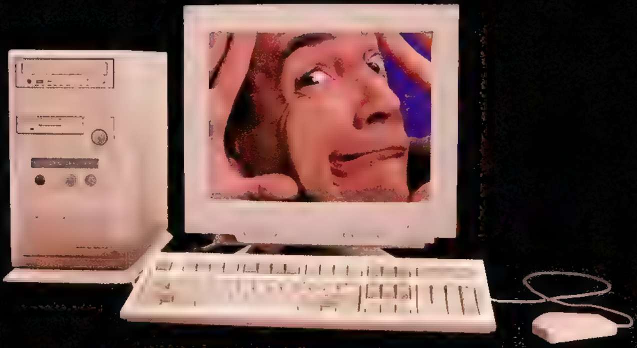

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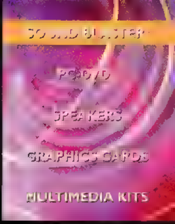

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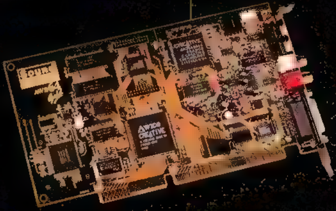

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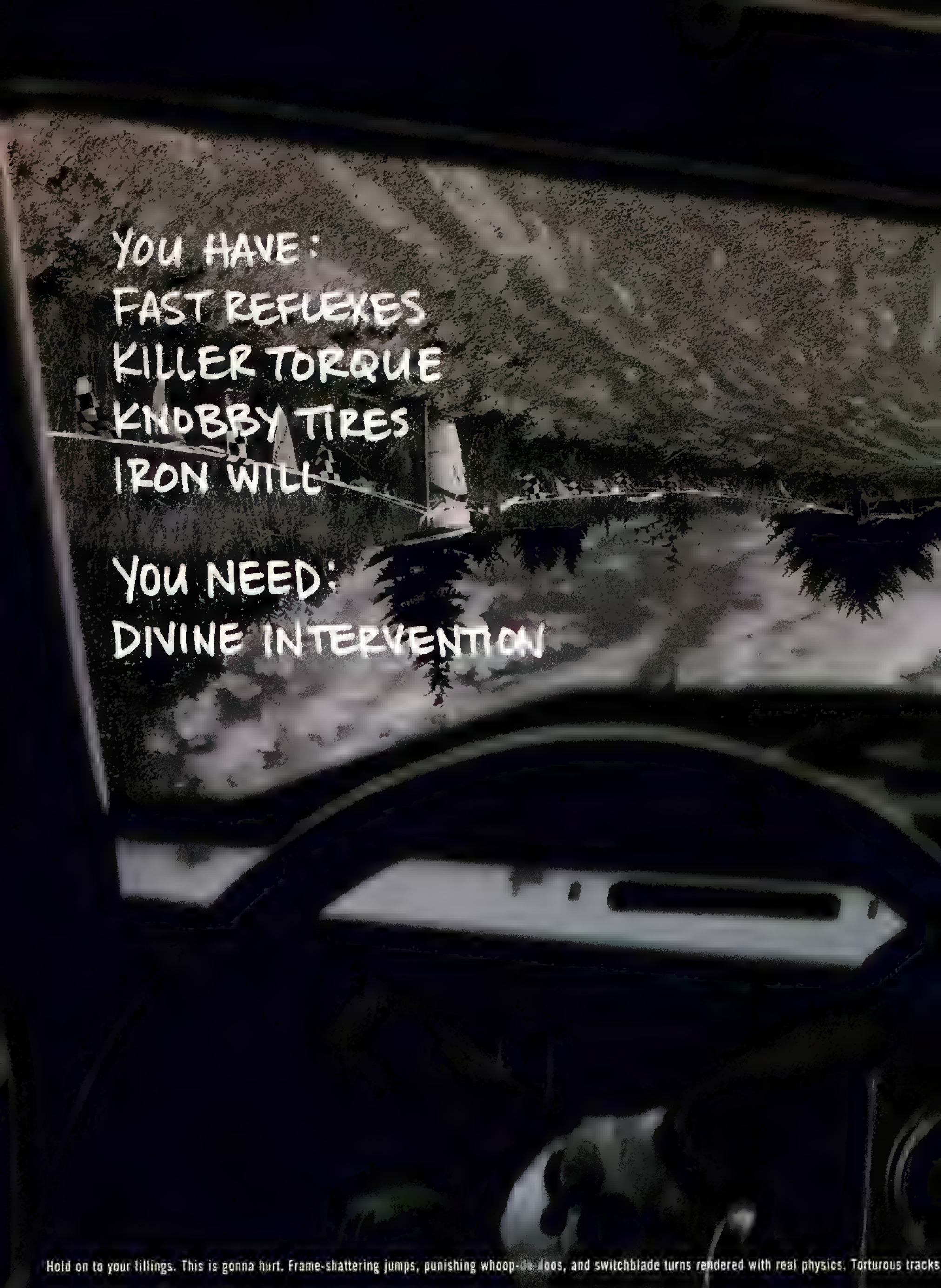
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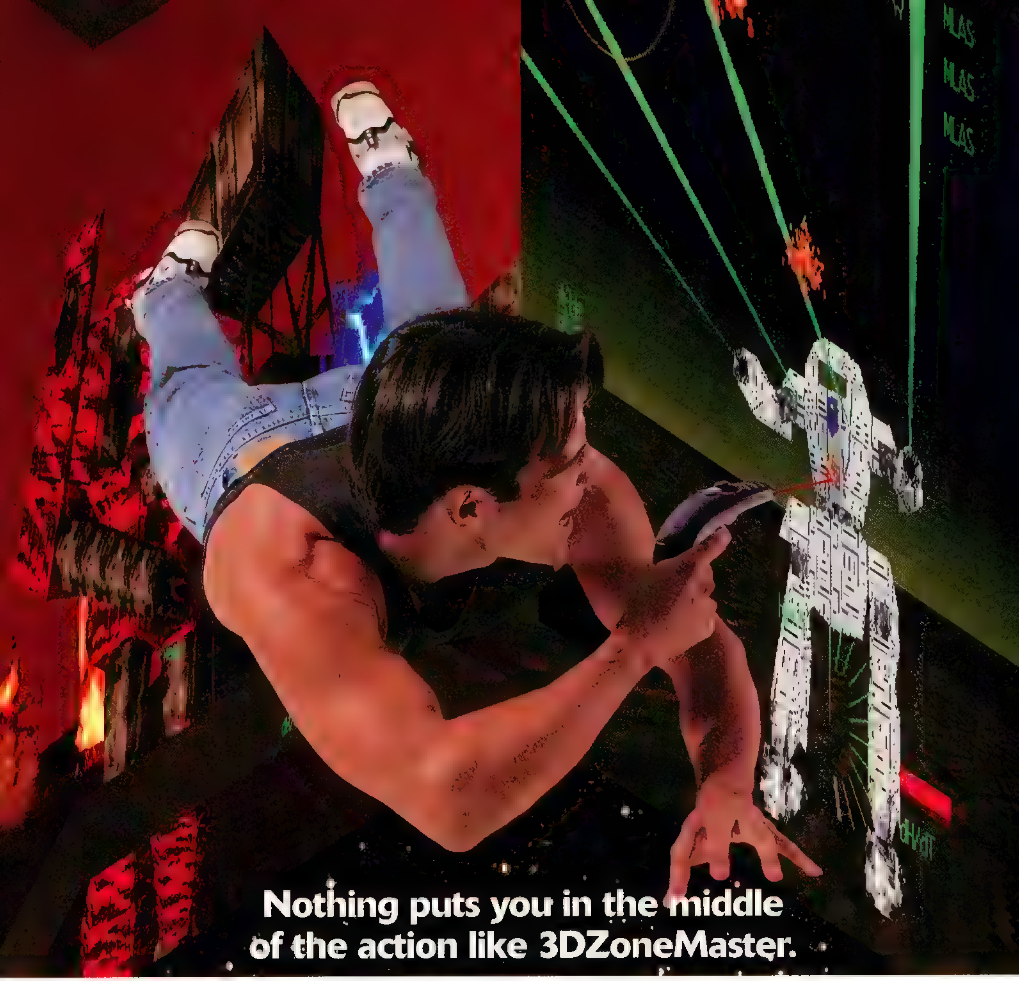
Nothing puts you in the middle of the action like 3DZoneMaster.

Still using an 80's-style joystick designed for flight-simulation games? Or even worse, a keyboard? Maybe that's why legions of butt-ugly mutants are splattering your guts all over the galaxy before you advance even one level.

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The 3DZoneMaster includes an array of programmable multi-function buttons to let you command all the firepower each game has to offer. And it's ready out of the box with Windows95* drivers, Netscape Navigator,™ exciting games and a host of predefined game sets.

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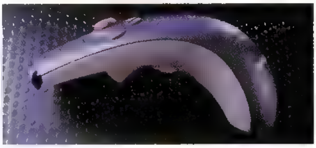

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Product Information Number 334

HARDWARE

Looking for the ideal piece of holiday hardware to put on your wish-list this festive season? Dropping a few hints about the items on the following pages to your well-heeled loved ones should produce the desired results…

Since the unparalleled Hard Stuff section joined our happy little editorial family in May, we've reviewed tons of peripherals and gadgets. We've seen a lot of junk, but some of the joysticks, video accelerators, sound cards, modems, and other gizmos are truly great and deserve a spot on your wish list or, if you're in the giving mood, would make nice gifts for friends and loved ones. Other stuff might be more suited to bestow upon somebody who already hates you.

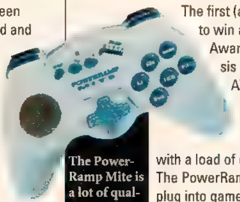
But in the spirit of holiday cheer, we're going to focus on the good and forget about the rest. This "best of the best" list is comprised of all of the gadgets that have been honored with our Editors' Choice award and a few others that, while they might be less than perfect, may still bring delight to certain audiences.

GAME CONTROLLERS

There's no piece of hardware more directly game-related than a joystick or gamepad. The market is saturated with gaming input devices, and they're all vying for your hard-earned spondoolix. But the choice of a gaming controller is extremely subjective; even here at *PC Gamer*, it's often the case that what one of us loves, somebody else wouldn't use if their life depended on it. Your decision should boil down to several factors: what types of games you play, which features you care for, how much you have to spend, and your own personal taste. With that in mind, here are the gaming controllers that we think stand out from the crowd.

ACT Labs PowerRamp Mite

ACT Labs • (604) 278-3650
www.actlab.com



The PowerRamp Mite is a lot of quality in a little package.

The first (and only) gamepad to win an Editors' Choice Award since the genesis of the Hard Stuff, ATC Labs' PowerRamp Mite is a comfortable, durable device with a load of exciting features. The PowerRamp Mite doesn't plug into game port at all; instead, it's essentially a keyboard emulator with plenty of programmable buttons that not only can be mapped to keys, but combinations of keys. The intuitive programming interface allows the PowerRamp Mite to remember up to four macros in its own memory. Clearly one of the finest gamepads available for the PC, the PowerRamp Mite is an action gamer's dream.

The CH Force FX brought us our first glimpse at the wonders of force feedback.

CH Force FX

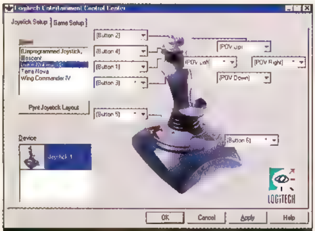
CH Products • (619) 598-2518
www.chproducts.com

Partnered with Immersion, creators of the I-Force force feedback API, CH Products brought us the very first force feedback joystick months before any competition was to come along. Built with the solid quality typical of other CH joysticks, the Force FX gave us a glimpse of the most exciting new trend to hit gaming controllers in years. The Force FX brought new meaning to the idea of intense gaming, letting us feel the jolt of incoming fire, the thud of collisions, the vibration of emptying a machine gun clip into an enemy unit, and all of the other effects once left only to the imagination.

Logitech WingMan Extreme Digital

Logitech • (510) 795-8500
www.logitech.com

Possibly the most comfortable joystick in the *PC Gamer* office, Logitech's foray into digital control is an extension of its usual high quality



Once you've played *Moto Racer* with the WingMan Extreme Digital, you'll never want to let go of it.

joystick construction. The legendary Logitech grip combined with perfect tension and the most intuitive software programming interface on the market make this general-purpose stick a must try for any gamer. Unlike some digital sticks, the WingMan Extreme Digital works through Windows 95 and DOS, so you don't have to abandon your collection of classic games for the precision of digital control.

Saitek X36 Flight Control System

Saitek • (310)212-5412
www.saitek.com

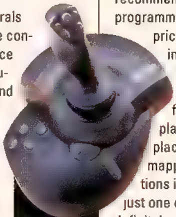
This one has it all and then some. A combination joystick and throttle, the X36 Flight Control System is packed with buttons, knobs, sliders, wheels, bells, whistles, kitchen sinks, etc. For fans of modern military flight sims, this very programmable, comfortable and inclusive set has everything, and its price makes it far more accessible than similar combo sets. The X36's excellent programming interface makes all of the features useful, and CH compatibility for legacy games makes this the only controller you'll need.

Jet jockeys rejoice: The X36 is everything you need to splash MiGs for years to come.

Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro

Microsoft • (800) 429-9400
www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

Microsoft's SideWinder peripherals are among the best selling game controllers, and the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro builds on the popular features of the original line and throws in the hottest new innovation in joysticks to boot. Featuring an ergonomic grip, eight programmable buttons (with a shift button to double their usefulness), a hat switch, a throttle, and a twist axis, the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro takes this new technology another step toward excellence. With more and more game developers creating force feedback enhanced games, this will be a trend to watch, and the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro is a great way to get started.



The SideWinder Force Feedback Pro from Microsoft goes the next step toward putting you in the game.

InterAct 3D Program Pad

InterAct Accessories • (310) 732-6866
www.interact-acc.com

InterAct scored big with this gamepad, considering it's still in active service at *PC Gamer* months after it was reviewed. One of the most comfortable gamepads available, the 3D Program Pad has 14 well-placed, programmable buttons to which you can map individual keystrokes or combos. An intuitive hardware programming scheme lets you change functions on the fly, but the software interface, required for programming combos, could have used a little more work. Overall, though, the 3D Program Pad is a well-designed and useful controller, and it's hard to miss: it's the only gamepad we've seen made of deliciously cheesy clear plastic!

The see-through 3D Program Pad is comfortable and highly programmable.

ACT Labs EagleMax

ACT Labs • (604) 278-3650
www.actlab.com

The EagleMax is a gem that we'll happily recommend to gamers who want awesome programmability at a surprisingly affordable price. This truly unique, insectoid-looking stick does single and combo key-mapping to any of its many buttons, a handful of which suffer from unfortunate, non-ergonomic placement. A very cool, and well-placed, rocker switch is perfect for mapping accelerate/decelerate functions in flight or racing games, and that's just one of many neat features. The good definitely outweighs the disappointing in the EagleMax, making it a worthy, all-purpose joystick with a lot of bang for the buck.

ACT Labs EagleMax is as functional as it is unique-looking.

Gravis Blackhawk

Advanced Gravis • (800) 257-0061
www.gravis.com

This is a well built, very small joystick that's simple and effective. The Blackhawk is perfect for gamers overwhelmed by too many buttons and the need to program them for each game. A simple four-button joystick with built-in throttle, the Blackhawk relies on its solid construction, comfort and ease of use, and for the most part, it succeeds. The tiny handle is low to the wide base, making this a very stable joystick. On the downside, the Gravis' grip is a little too thin at the bottom, and the fourth fire button is inconveniently located on the base instead of the stick, where the other three buttons reside. But these problems are minor, and overall the Blackhawk is a fine stick.

The tiny Gravis Blackhawk succeeds in its simplicity.

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Bandai Digital Entertainment

Product Information Number 100

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PC EDITORS' CHOICE™
September 9, 1997
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Product Information Number 131

GAME CONTROLLERS:

NEW FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

There's a whole new wave of new controllers due to arrive soon, including the first-ever force feedback driving wheels. Unfortunately, none made it to us in time for review this issue, but many will be appearing on hardware shelves in time for the holiday season, so here's a guide to what you should be looking out for.

SC&T Ultimate Per4mer Racing Wheel with Force Effects

SC&T • (602) 368-9490
www.platinumsound.com

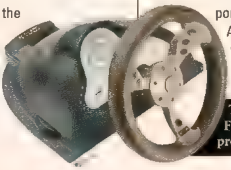
SC&T's Ultimate Per4mer with Force Effects will be one of the first force feedback racing wheels.

The Ultimate Per4mer Racing Wheel with Force Effects is filled with potential. The non-force feedback version proved to be a major improvement over SC&T's original Per4mer, but it remains to be seen if force feedback will make a major difference to the Per4mer range, or if this new addition is just a gimmick.

ACT Labs RS and Force RS

ACT Labs • (604) 278-3650
www.actlab.com

The RS, or Racing System, line from ACT Labs promises to be packed with features. Besides its many programmable buttons, rubber grip, realistic pedals, and other good features, the RS wheels will be compatible across PC and console systems through the use of a cartridge system. Even more amazing: the Force RS, the force feedback version of this system complete with pedals, will sell for under $100!



The ACT Labs RS and Force RS look to be promising racing wheels.

Thrustmaster RAGE 3D

Thrustmaster • (503) 615-3200
www.thrustmaster.com

The chubby RAGE 3D could be a gamepad with a difference.

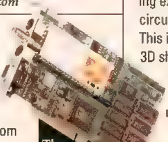
The latecomer in the new line of Thrustmaster products is the RAGE 3D gamepad. (The other new TM controllers, the NASCAR Pro Racing Wheel and the Millennium Inceptor 3D, will be reviewed next issue.) The biggest, fattest gamepad we've ever seen, the RAGE 3D looks very comfy. The thumb pad will offer proportional control, and up to four pads can be linked for multi-player merriment.

GRAPHICS ACCELERATORS

1997 was an amazing year for video acceleration. We saw the doors blown off the VGA and SVGA standards, as second generation 3D chips went from cool accessories to must-haves for serious gamers. Meanwhile, the television was slowly transformed into a monitor as demand, and support, for TV-out functionality grew across the industry. So, without further ado, here are video cards and accelerators that *PC Gamer* holds in the highest regard.

ATI All-In-Wonder

ATI Technologies • (905) 882-2626
www.atitech.com



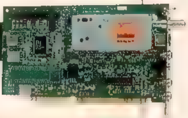
The ATI All-In-Wonder is the multi-purpose Cuisinart of computer graphics products.

The All-In-Wonder was hailed as *the* PC-to-television solution for the consumer, and there's little wonder why. This is the card that does *everything*, from excellent 2D and decent 3D acceleration to unparalleled TV support including a TV tuner, video capture, MPEG support, and more. The All-In-Wonder lets you watch TV on your PC and vice versa, capture stills and AVIs from TV feed, play Rage II accelerated games, and generally blurs the line between television and computer entertainment. ATI's upcoming All-In-Wonder Pro will offer even more features and the powerful Rage Pro 2D/3D accelerator.

ATI-TV

ATI Technologies • (905) 882-2626
www.atitech.com

An add-on card for ATI Multimedia Channel equipped boards (meaning, some ATI boards), the ATI-TV adds the excellent tuner functionality found on the All-In-Wonder cards. The ATI-TV allows you to watch television on your PC, transcribe the closed captioning into a text file, capture video, and do other television-related computing.



The ATI-TV adds an intelligent tuner to your PC.

Canopus Total 3D

Canopus • (408) 467-4000
www.canopuscorp.com

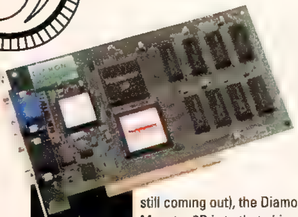
The Canopus Total 3D includes a number of bonuses, like a set of 3D Spex.

The Rendition V1000 chipset proved to be one of the most popular and widely supported 2D/3D acceleration standards, and the Canopus Total 3D delivers it with style. A one PCI-slot solution covering 2D and 3D acceleration, the Total 3D comes with a killer software bundle and some interesting extras. The Total 3D packs in a Spatializer circuit to add 3D effects to your sound card. This is also one of the first cards to incorporate 3D shutter glasses support. Though they were never really widely supported, Canopus includes a set of 3D Spex that work with most of the bundled games.

Diamond Monster 3D

Diamond Multimedia • (800) 468-5846
www.diamondmm.com

This is the one. While there are other 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics add-in cards (in fact, they're



The Monster 3D from Diamond Multimedia has become the quintessential gaming 3D accelerator.

still coming out), the Diamond Monster 3D is to that chipset what Coca-Cola is to the soda industry. There are people that refer to *any* 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics card as a "Monster 3D," even when it's something else. 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics, of course, is the most supported 3D chipset, and arguably the best of the second generation 3D accelerators. An add-on, the Monster 3D works in conjunction with just about any 2D or 2D/3D card and comes with a massive bundle of full games, demos, and shareware.

RealVision Flash 3D

Deltron • (519) 734-8032
www.deltrontech.com

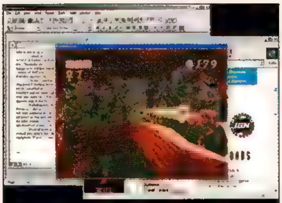
Hailing from Taiwan, Deltron has its own answer to the Voodoo Graphics bandwagon. The RealVision Flash 3D made the awesome Voodoo Graphics chipset more affordable by eliminating the bundle and providing the bare essentials. The Flash 3D is the Voodoo Graphics answer for gamers who already have — or have already decided upon — the 3D accelerated games they want to play and could care less about the freebies. With basically the same architecture as the rest of the Voodoo Graphics products, the Flash 3D has become desirable as the low cost, high performance 3D solution.

Deltron's RealVision Flash 3D is a no-frills, low priced 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics card.

Hercules Stingray 128/3D

Hercules • (510) 623-6030
www.hercules.com

The 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics chipset created demand for a single slot solution with the power of Voodoo. The Voodoo Rush chipset — coupled with an Alliance AT3D 2D/3D board — is the answer, and the first card on the market to offer it was the Stingray 128/3D. Since its introduction, Hercules has been gradually improving the architecture of the product. In its current incarnation, the Stingray 128/3D has 8MB of RAM, TV out ports, VESA support and a flashable BIOS, all of which are relatively new to the Stingray 128/3D and make this a killer card.

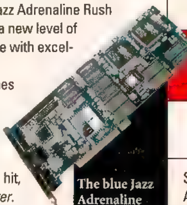


Windowed 3Dfx accelerated graphics weren't possible before the Voodoo Rush chipset, and Hercules brought it to us first.

Jazz Adrenaline Rush 3D

Jazz Multimedia • (408) 727-8900
www.jazzmm.com

The second in a growing line of 3Dfx Voodoo Rush products, the Jazz Adrenaline Rush brings the chipset to a new level of affordability. Complete with excellent support, the Jazz Adrenaline Rush comes loaded with 6MB of total RAM and includes a decent bundle of full games including the console hit, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter.* The Jazz Adrenaline Rush is an excellent and affordable single slot 3Dfx solution, and it's highly recommended for incredible 3D gaming.



The blue Jazz Adrenaline Rush is truly a gamer's card.

VideoLogic Apocalypse 5D

VideoLogic • (800) 578-5644
www.videologic.com

An excellent single slot solution with the PowerVR PCX2 3D accelerator, the Apocalypse 5D is a solid choice for 3D acceleration. PowerVR is still gaining support in an industry dominated by 3Dfx, and many gamers consider the PCX2 chipset superior to the Voodoo family. The 2D acceleration of the GrafixStar 600, which provides the 2D portion of the Apocalypse 5D, is good too.

The STB Velocity 128 is a very promising new 2D/3D accelerator.

STB Velocity 128

STB • (800) 234-4334
www.stb.com

This just in: Check out the review this issue, which extols the benefits of the newest 2D/3D chipset poised to take the gaming world by storm. Maybe. The Velocity 128 harnesses the awesome power of the NVIDIA Riva 128 to churn out incredible Direct3D numbers. A D3D accelerator with Windows 95 OpenGL support pending, the only thing that remains to be seen is how the Riva 128 will stand up against the 3Dfx chips in *GLQuake* and its ilk. STB is the first to offer what very well could become the next standard in 3D gaming.

Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo

Intergraph • (800) 763-0242
www.intergraph.com

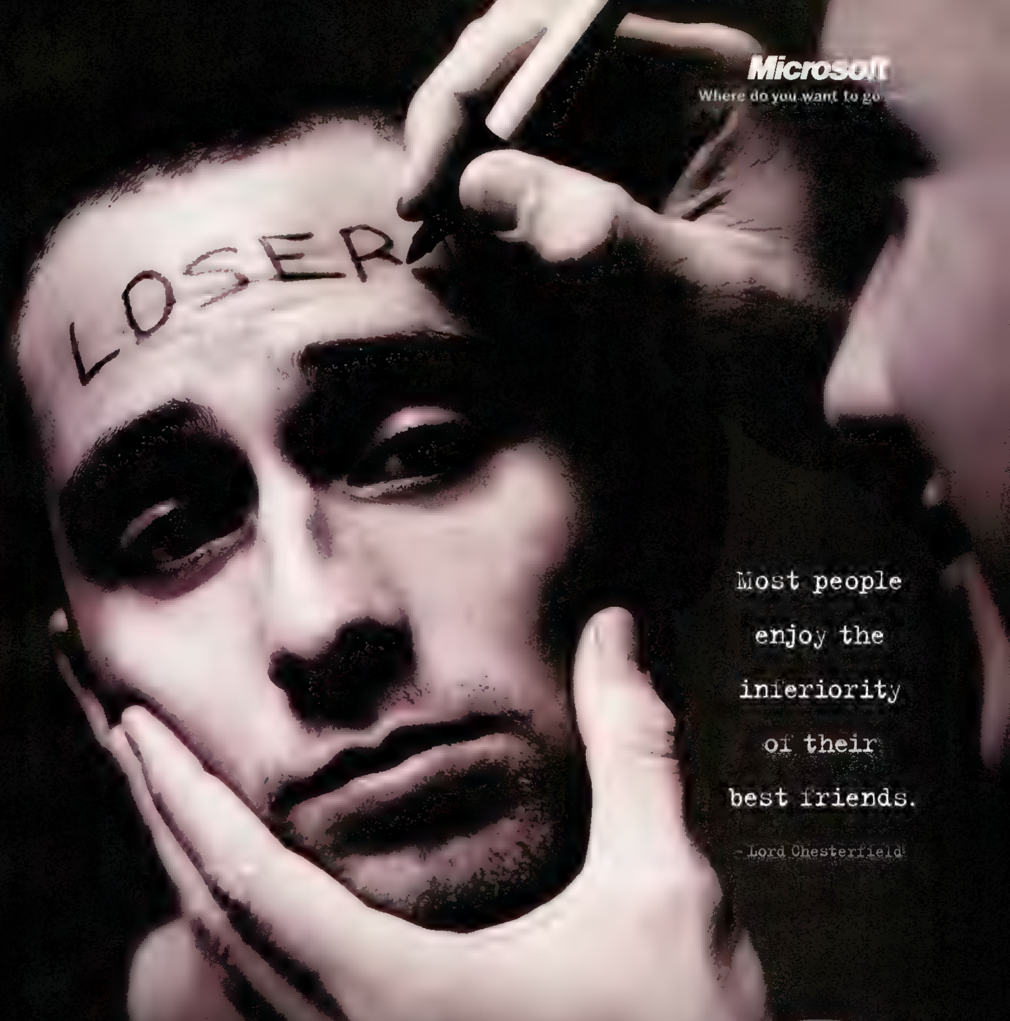
So the Hercules Stingray 128/3D and the Jazz Adrenaline Rush 3D won Editors' Choice Awards in past issues, but the Intense 3D Voodoo, which is essentially the same card, did not. What gives?

Quite simply, the Stingray did it first and the Jazz did it much cheaper, both before the Intense 3D Voodoo

The Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo is the third — but probably not the last — Voodoo Rush board.

Continued on page 140

Microsoft
Where do you want to go today?


LOSER
Most people enjoy the inferiority of their best friends.
– Lord Chesterfield

Compete head-to-head. Surrender nothing.

The Microsoft® SideWinder® game pad brings the action of video game play to the PC. Now, as many as four of you can play Windows® 95-based games by daisy-chaining these pads together without losing any functionality. Only SideWinder game pads do this.

Map complicated, hard-to-remember multi-button moves to a single button for execution of lethal maneuvers. And it's a perfect fit for hands of all sizes, letting you keep a solid grip and making it easier to use any of the buttons or triggers. So, the more SideWinder game pads you own, the more friends you can take advantage of.

MICROSOFT®
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Game Pad

www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

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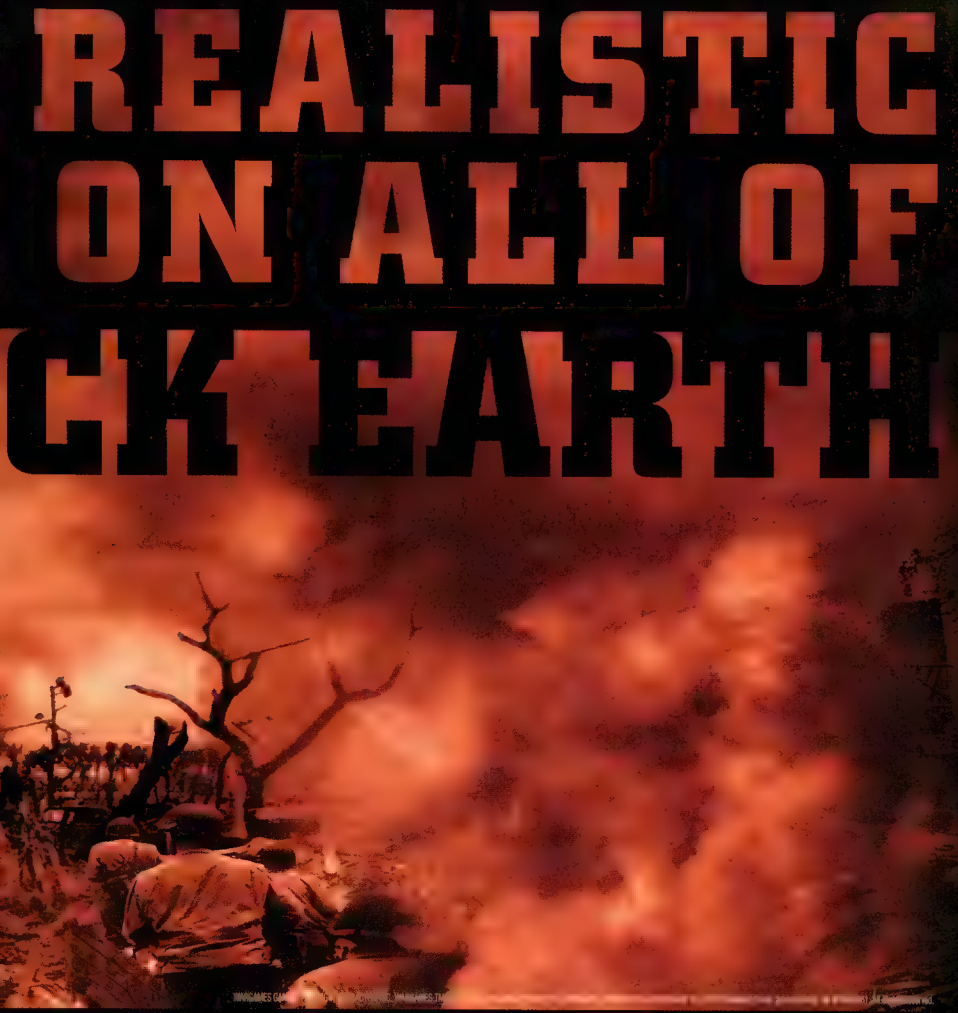
THE MOST
WAR GAME
GOD'S BLA



Welcome to WarGames, the most realistic 3D combat game. You've hacked into NORAD and control the most firepower the world has ever known. It's as close to Armageddon as you ever wanna get.

WarGames. Real War. Real Time.

www.wargamesmgm.com

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

WARGAMES

MGM INTERACTIVE

INTERACTIVE STUDIOS

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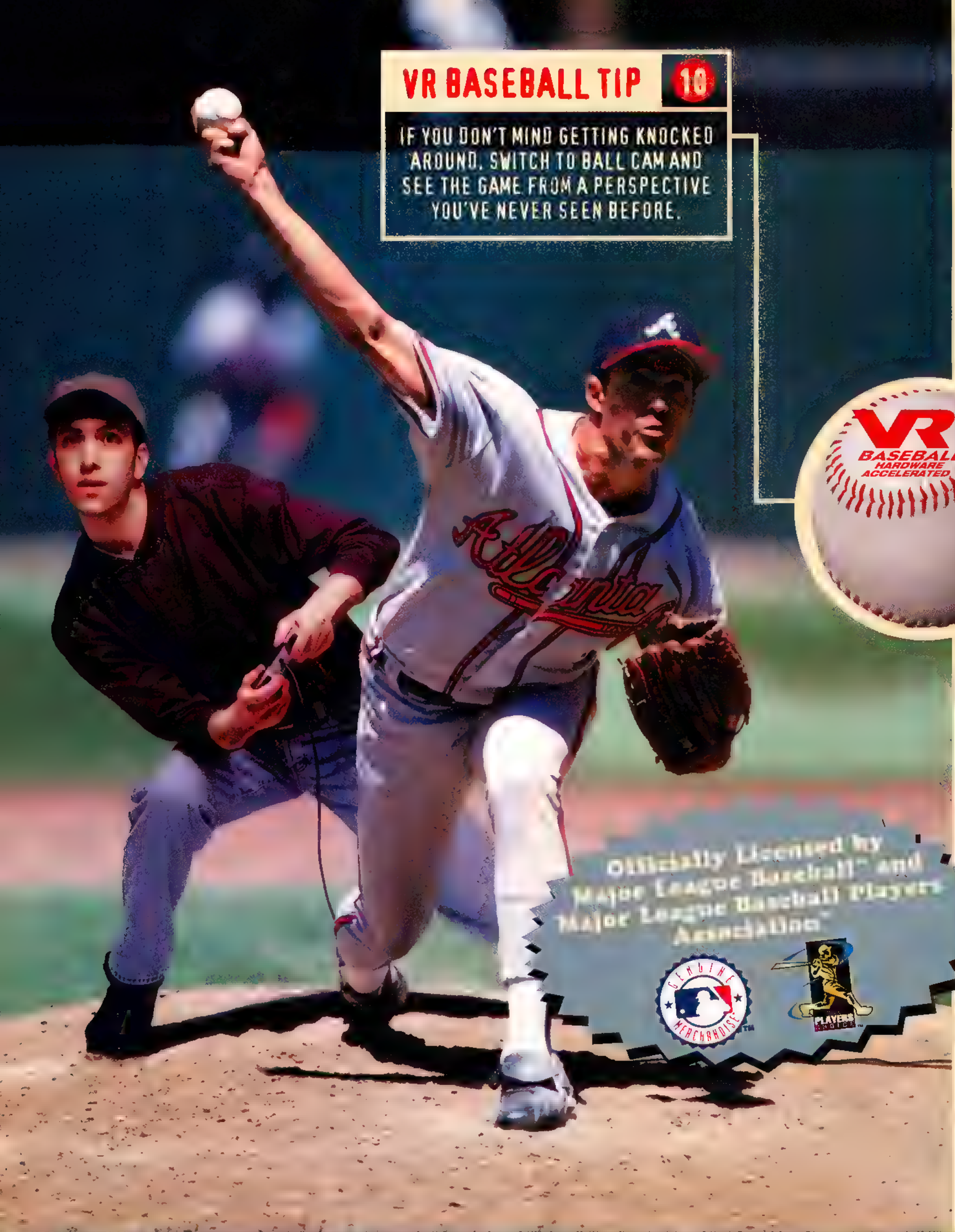
VR BASEBALL TIP 10
IF YOU DON'T MIND GETTING KNOCKED AROUND, SWITCH TO BALL CAM AND SEE THE GAME FROM A PERSPECTIVE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
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KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Check out the VR Baseball interactive preview at www.vrsports.com

Check out the official Major League Baseball™ web site at www.majorleaguebaseball.com

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NEW! VR BASEBALL™

HARDWARE ACCELERATED FOR WINDOWS® '95

Now, the baseball game which received rave reviews for the Sony PlayStation™ is available for Windows® '95. But you better have a 3-D graphics card because VR Baseball is the next generation of PC baseball games and only works with hardware accelerated systems. 640 x 480 SVGA graphics with over 65,000 colors, bilinear filtering for smoother polygons and textures, real cast shadows and real-time 360° 3-D gameplay make this game the ultimate PC baseball experience.

- **Play Major League Baseball™ from any position or perspective in a real-time 360° 3-D world.**
- **Super fast Season Play mode with top 10 or full stats, and mid-season All-Star voting and game. Plus, expanded functionality in statistical analysis allows you to view and sort across many categories.**
- **Updated stats, rosters (including new All-Star rosters), uniform styles, logos and inter-league play.**
- **Keep your stats current by downloading updates from the VR Sports website at www.vrsports.com.**
- **Over 700 Major League Baseball™ players, all 28 3-D stadiums, real-time working scoreboard, four uniform options per team, four play options and 3 difficulty settings.**
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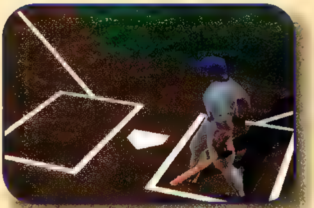
- **Simultaneous batter and baserunner control.**
- **Multiplayer option supports most joysticks and gamepads.**



"...VR Baseball is the new king of baseball games." – *PS Extreme*

"... a real contender for baseball game of the year... 92%" – *P.S.X.*

"Beautifully textured polygonal players move with life-like grace." – *Game Pro*

"VR Baseball will make you eat, sleep and live baseball." – *Game Informer*

VR
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VR Baseball

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The Difference Is Real.™

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

PlayStation. ALSO AVAILABLE!

Product Information Number 189

became available. The Intense 3D is almost as affordable as the Jazz, but the only new tweak it has to offer is poor quality, flickery TV output.

That doesn't make the Intense 3D Voodoo any less of a great product, however, and it's highly recommended as a Voodoo Rush solution. In fact, since Intergraph has a history of backing up its products long after their release, you may want to look at this before you consider the Stingray.

GRAPHICS ACCELERATORS:

NEW FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

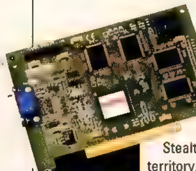
The graphics accelerator market is in a state of evolution right now. As editor Dan Bennett likes to point out, don't forget the VHS/Beta wars during the consumer-ization of VCRs; a standard in 3D acceleration has not been reached, even though it currently looks like it's going to be 3Dfx.

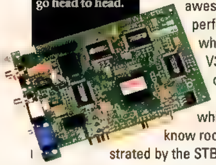
There's a lot of new stuff coming out for the holiday season, and some of it looks promising. Take a look:

Diamond Stealth II and Viper V330

Diamond Multimedia • (800) 468-5846
www.diamondmm.com

Diamond is covering all the bases in order to come out on top of the 3D chipset fracas. The Stealth II wisely takes the Stealth line out of ViRGE territory, instead using the next generation Rendition chipset. The Rendition V2000 family looks promising, and the Diamond Stealth II packs a V2100 for what should be awesome 2D and 3D performance. Meanwhile, the Viper V330 is Diamond's offering of the NVIDIA Riva 128, which we already know rocks, as demonstrated by the STB Velocity.





Is Diamond hedging its bets in the 3D wars? The Stealth II and the Viper V330 appear poised to go head to head.

Canopus Pure 3D

Canopus • (408) 954-4500
www.canopuscorp.com

A new entry in the Voodoo Graphics market, the Pure 3D is being called the Swiss Army Knife of 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics products. This board looks especially promising in that it has 4MB dedicated texture storage rather than the usual 2MB; combined with a 2MB frame buffer, the Pure 3D has 6MB of RAM. Also included: S- and composite TV out ports.

Matrox M3D

Matrox • (514) 969-6320
www.matrox.com

For the first time, Matrox is offering a product with a chipset that wasn't designed in-house. The M3D is a 3D only add-in card featuring the PowerVR PCX2 3D chip. At a startling $99 dollars retail, the M3D will include tons of 3D accelerated game demos and OEM versions of *Hexen II* and *MDK*. Best of all: the M3D will run *GLQuake* at 30fps.

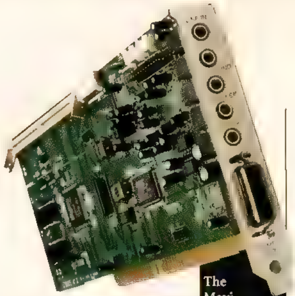
SOUND CARDS

Unfortunately, there were no Editors' Choice Awards given to any of the sound cards reviewed this past year. The reason? Computer audio is in a state of disarray: Windows 95, through DirectSound, is gradually dissolving the SoundBlaster compatibility standard, and there are several good sound cards that shine in Windows 95. The problem for gamers is that, in most cases, we still have a shelf full of DOS games that don't run well under Win 95, and non-SoundBlaster sound cards are often difficult to configure under DOS and offer poor quality SB compatibility. Despite this sorry state of affairs, there have been a couple of new sound cards well worth a look…

Guillemot MaxiSound Game Theater 64

Guillemot International (Distributed by UbiSoft in the U.S.) • (800) 967-0863
www.guillemot.com/usa/indexus.html

An excellent, full featured sound card, the Game Theater 64 goes in without a hitch and brings new life to all of your games. Featuring 64 voices of wavetable synthesis in hardware, the Game Theater supports the regular two speakers as well as an optional second set for surround sound. A very cool utility called *Maxi FX* can tweak the audio in your games to add 3D effects; it even includes pre-configured enhancement for 50 popular titles. With all of its features and awesome clarity, the affordable price makes this sound card a steal.

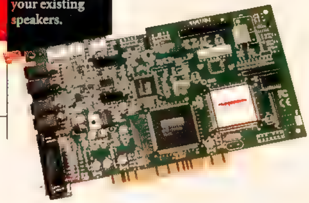


The Maxi-Sound Game Theater 64 is a high quality, high fidelity sound card.

Diamond Monster Sound

Diamond Multimedia • (800) 468-5846
www.diamondmm.com

The most exciting new PC sound technology since digital audio resides in the chip found on Diamond's Monster Sound. Aureal Semiconductor's A3D is the first hardware solution to produce convincing, 3D sound through two speakers. Support for the new technology is growing; it already appears in several high-profile titles including Lucasarts' *Jedi Knight* and Interplay's *Starfleet Academy*. The depth that Monster Sound adds to supporting games has to be heard to be believed, and it's especially convincing through a set of quality headphones. The Monster Sound works on its own through Windows 95, but can also be coupled with an existing sound card to ensure legacy compatibility. The A3D also accelerates Microsoft's DirectSound3D audio API.



Diamond's Monster Sound provides amazing, positional 3D sound through your existing speakers.

SOUND CARDS:

NEW FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

AVM Apex Sound Card

AVM Technology • (800) 880-0041
www.avmtechnology.com

Billed as a professional audio card, the Apex sound card boasts features galore. A full duplex card with built in 3D sound processing, the Apex does 20-bit wavetable synthesis for awesome quality MIDI. Fully Windows 95 compatible, the Apex includes a 2MB wavetable ROM and can handle up to 64MB of sample memory.

SPEAKER SYSTEMS

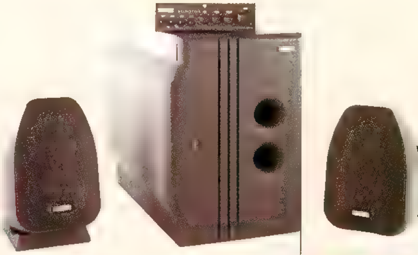
There was a time when the multimedia speaker market was divided by a canyon-sized price gap: You either got a cheap, poor-quality set cheap or mortgaged the house for a powerful, high quality system. Throughout the year, though, the quality — and affordability — of multimedia speakers has gone up while the price has come down. This is A Good Thing.

Cambridge MicroWorks and PCWorks

Cambridge SoundWorks • (800) 367-4434
www.hifi.com

Cambridge SoundWorks' distinctive little cubes have become heavily in demand around the *PC Gamer* office. At first glance, they're not very impressive, and nobody is quite prepared for the astounding sound they're capable of. The MicroWorks 4" cubes, along with the subwoofer, sound better than most home stereo systems; the high end is as crisp and clean as the low end is strong. The PCWorks' cubes and subwoofer are smaller and quieter but sound just as good. Also check out the SoundWorks, whose size and price fall between the MicroWorks and PCWorks. Without spending thousands of dollars, this is as good as PC audio gets.

The deceptive Cambridge MicroWorks' little cubes kick out an amazing wall of sound.



The sleek HPM-4060 system comes loaded with awesome sound and a generous helping of features.

Diamond Audio S2 Multimedia HPM-4060

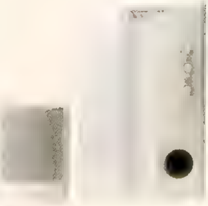
Diamond Audio Technology • (310) 582-1121
www.diamondaudio.com

Besides the incredible, powerful sound, this thumpin' system has handsome looks and excellent construction going for it. HPM-4060 has plenty of extra features to set it apart from the pack — as if that were necessary with the high quality sound this set produces. The subwoofer can be used for more than just the included satellite speakers; it supports input through two pairs of RCA jacks and two 1/8" phono jacks, and since bass is non-directional, it will work with any stereo equipment you already own. A separate control module puts volume, bass, treble and balance control wherever you want it — it can even be mounted in a 5" drive bay!

Altec ACS48 PowerCube Plus

Altec Lansing • (800) 258-3288
www.altecmm.com

Altec is known for its unique-looking, often huge speakers, so it's ironic that the best sound we've heard yet from one of the first makers of quality multimedia speakers comes from some of its smallest products. From the distinguished PowerCube line comes the ACS48 three-piece set, and it's a doozy. The ACS48s deliver remarkably clear and full sound and take up little desktop space. The digital control buttons on the right satellite can be a bit of a pain, but overall this is a highly recommended set.



The Altec ACS48 speaker system comes with powerful little satellites and a wood-encased subwoofer.

SYSTEMS

As all gamers know, there is a difference between a generic computer system and a gaming system. While just about any PC on the market will do a fine job with word processing, web surfing, checkbook balancing, list keeping, and other mundane functions, a gaming computer need a little more under the hood. Gamers need fast processors, powerful video acceleration, good sound, lots of RAM, oft-overlooked real mode drivers, ease of use and, most importantly, upgradability. Creating a great gaming system takes more than throwing a Pentium system together and naming it something like UltraPowerGameEliminatorX. The

no compromi
overpowering. deadly. abusive.
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Product Information Number 118

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Falcon Northwest has built a deserved reputation as the maker of the very best gaming machines on the market. The Falcon Mach V has everything gamers could want.

systems we recommend this year knew that well enough to stand out from the pack.

Falcon Mach V

Falcon Northwest • (800) 258-6778
www.falcon-nw.com

This is the company that created the gaming PC. Falcon Northwest was marketing high-end computers to gamers before other computer makers knew such a market existed. The long tenure has given Falcon Northwest a distinct advantage; to be frank, nothing else we've seen comes close to the gaming power in the ever-evolving Mach V.

The Mach V costs a little more than your average game-oriented system, but it's worth every penny. Systems are custom-built to the needs of each customer; a telephone call to order a Mach V can take more than an hour as the operators will interview and educate their customers to make sure every need is fulfilled. Falcon is always on the cutting edge of the technology curve; when faster processors, motherboards, RAM, or other components become available, expect them to turn up in a Falcon Mach V.

The computers come with the most comprehensive documentation we've ever seen, each "manual" being tailored to the individual system it accompanies. Every component is tested before the system ships. When you order a Falcon Mach V, you get *everything* you'll need for a complete gaming experience.

Gateway Destination D5-200

Gateway 2000 • (800) 846-4208
www.gateway2000.com

Not exactly a gaming system, the Destination won our accolades for its excellence in another area. The first of the big-screen PCs, the Destination is more than a computer; it's a complete home entertainment system just waiting for a living room to take over.

Gateway thought of everything for the Destination, and offers it at an excellent price. A 31" monitor is the centerpiece of the collection, which features a state-of-the-art PC, an awesome Dolby Surround compliant harmon/kardon receiver, five speakers, a subwoofer, and a cordless keyboard and mouse/remote control device. Of course, you'll be able to choose different components depending on your needs. The h/k receiver is universal, so any other audio/video components you have, such as a VCR or a CD player, can be incorporated into the system. The STB TV video card is equipped with a TV tuner, so the monitor doubles as a big-screen TV.

One of the few complaints we originally had with our Destination has been addressed. When we first looked at the Destination, it

The Gateway 2000 Destination PCs are complete home entertainment systems at affordable prices.

lacked any 3D acceleration at all. Gateway took a long time deciding which 3D acceleration standard include in the Destination line, but now VideoLogic Apocalypse 3Dx accelerators are offered as an option. Gateway has also made a DVD-ROM drive standard equipment.

MISCELLANEOUS

There are a few other miscellaneous devices that we would be remiss to forget to tell you about —and your shopping list may be incomplete without.

The Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV is a DVD solution for your computer *and* your home entertainment system.

Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV

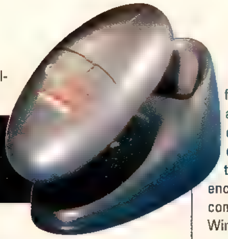
Hi-Val • (714) 953-3000
www.hival.com

The Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV kit is everything you need to start enjoying the new DVD standard, both on your PC and your home entertainment system. The kit is simple to install, works flawlessly, and comes with a DVD-ROM drive, an MPEG-2/Dolby Digital decoder board and a WAVECOM RF Link transmitter and receiver set. You install your DVD-ROM kit on your PC and use the WAVECOM to send the signal to your television, VCR or receiver. Everything you need to play DVD-ROM movies on your PC and watch DVD movies on your TV is included.

Diamond Wireless GyroMouse

Diamond Multimedia • (800) 468-5846
www.diamondmm.com

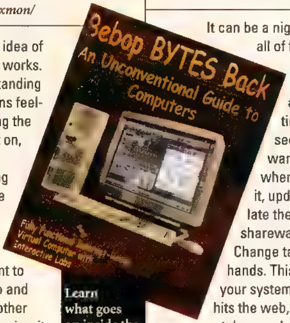
The Wireless GyroMouse is for the PC buff who has everything. This is a cool gadget that's not only useful but makes an interesting conversation piece. The GyroMouse works on the desk like a normal wireless mouse, but the real experience begins when you lift it into the air. An internal gyroscope tracks the spatial movement of the mouse and the on-screen cursor follows along.


Know a gamer who has everything? He probably doesn't have the Wireless GyroMouse.

Bebop Bytes Back

By Clive "Max" Maxfield and Alvin Brown
Doône Publications • (800) 311-3753
ro.com/maxmon/

Everyone has a different idea of knowing how something works. To some people, understanding how a PC functions means feeling confident that pushing the big, round button turns it on, and moving the mouse around causes something or other to happen on the screen. There are those of us, however, who want to know how a computer *works;* we want to get beneath the 3D video and digital audio and all the other gloss, climb right into the circuit boards and find out about bits and transistors! How do the components interact? What do chips really *do?*


Bebop BYTES Back
An Unconventional Guide to Computers
Fully Functional ... Virtual Computer with Interactive Labs
Learn what goes on inside the beige box with this friendly book.

The budding PC guru need look no further than *Bebop Bytes Back*, a friendly, accessibly written book filled with facts, details, and history of computers. To help demonstrate the concepts introduced in the book, the thoughtful authors have enclosed a working computer — which is compressed onto a CD-ROM and runs on Windows 95.

CyberMedia Oil Change

CyberMedia • (310) 581-4700
www.cybermedia.com

It can be a nightmare trying to keep all of the device drivers and program versions up to date in a modern PC, and it gets worse all the time. These days it seems as though no software is actually finished when it ships, and to prove it, updates and patches populate the web as much as shareware. CyberMedia Oil Change takes the burden off your hands. This handy utility checks your system thoroughly and then hits the web, looking for new drivers, patches, and updates for your hardware and software. It will even install them automatically. While Oil Change's game support was minimal at first, the company has been making great strides to expand it.

oil change
First Aid fixes Windows problems... Automatically!
Stop
Oil Change takes care of all the nitty-gritty driver and program updates so you don't have to.

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SECRET WEAPON
HEAVY GEAR
HEAVY GEAR
Jeremy,
Wal-Mart customer
SECRET WEAPON
WAL-MART
Get this game elsewhere and you'll be only half the warrior you could be.

Start at the top with an advanced pilot. Only available in the Special Wal-Mart Edition of Heavy Gear.

The game is Heavy Gear. And this time you're on the internet piloting your gear into combat. The pilot you're up against has become more and more powerful gaining strength and experience with each battle. And only a pilot with more victories could prevail.

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So you can work your way to the top, or bypass all the lower level combats and show your opponent who's boss with an experienced pilot. It's our version of a secret weapon.

But hurry, because Wal-Mart's newly upgraded software department is catching on. And pretty soon, friends and enemies alike will know where to find this Special Edition of Heavy Gear and all the hottest software titles at every day low prices. So pray for the day you come up against someone else with our secret weapon. Because then you'll find out if you're half the warrior you think you are.

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Heavy Gear available November 15

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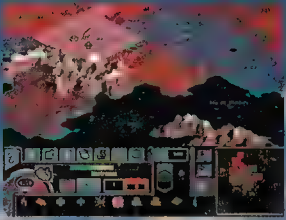

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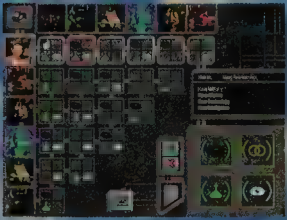

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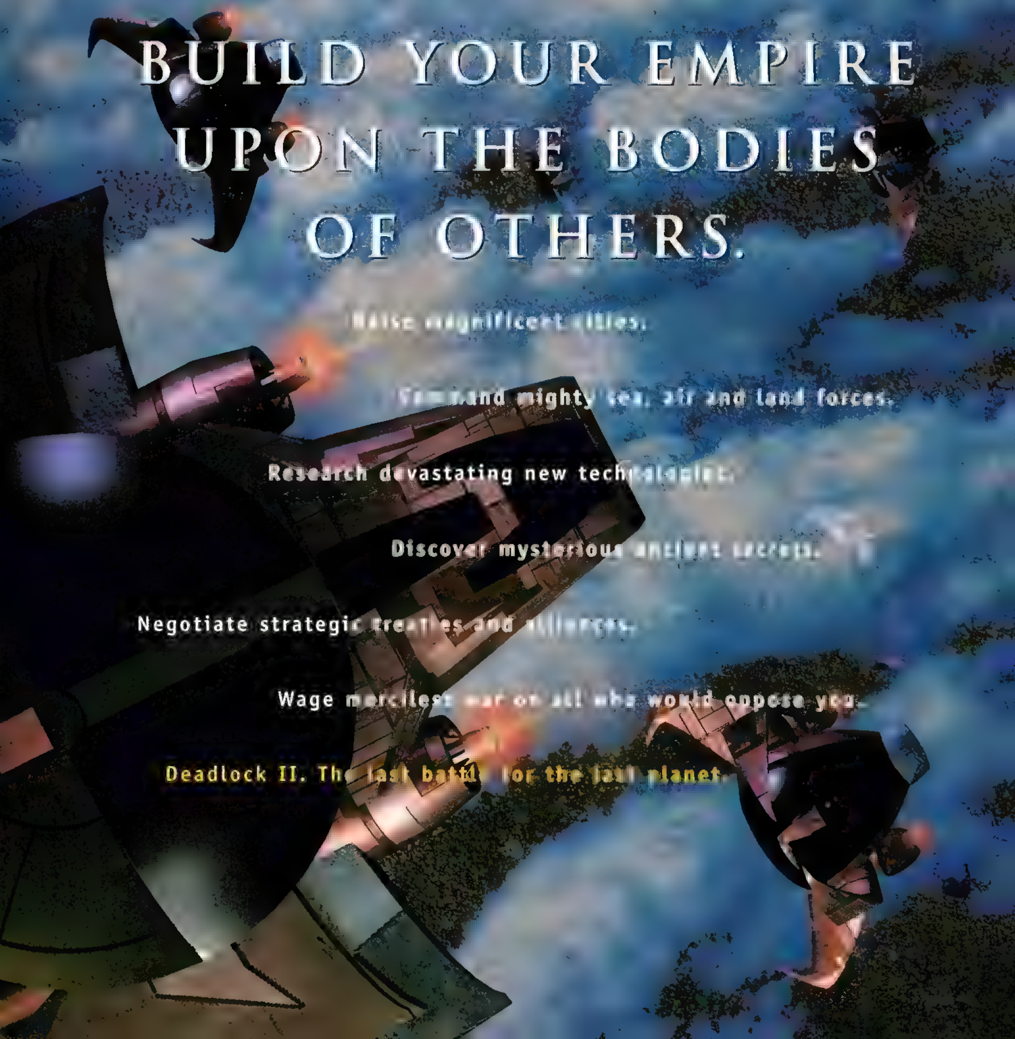

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Monster 3D graphics! Monster 3D sound! (Gaming has never been so fierce.)

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- ACCELERATES DIRECTSOUND, THE NEW MICROSOFT AUDIO STANDARD
- IDEAL FOR HEADPHONES OR 2-4 SPEAKERS
- FREE FULL-VERSION GAMES INCLUDED

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Killer Sound for Awesome 3D Gaming!

It doesn't just surround you. It swallows you with realistic, heart-pounding 3D sound. And now, when you combine the amazing new Monster Sound PCI-based 3D audio card with our award-winning Monster 3D graphics accelerator, you'll have the ultimate gaming system for your Windows 95 PC. Using ground-breaking A3D Interactive technology from Aureal—initially developed for NASA virtual reality simulators—Monster Sound provides stunning, digital-quality 3D positional sound. And, according to *Computer Gaming World*, the Monster 3D graphics card is the ideal solution "for no-holds-barred blistering 3D performance." Separately, they bring the absolute best out of today's most outrageous games and Web sites. Together, they deliver performance that blows everything else away.

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DIAMOND
MULTIMEDIA
Accelerate your world.

Product Information Number 123

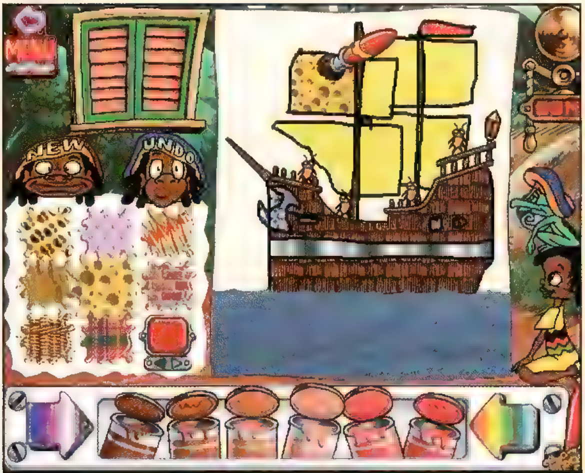
KIDS' SOFTWARE

When it comes time to do that holiday shopping, you can't forget the kids. Why stay up all night with Hopalong Horse, trying to fit bolt B into hole C, when you can give the little ones a great CD-ROM and have a long winter's nap?

Some of the best educational and children's packages of 1997 mix learning and gameplay into a richer soil than ever before; others discard the entertainment aspect in favor of easy access to spectacular data. But what makes one software package better than another is a sense of fun, a sense of humor, and a sense of respect. With these guiding principles, any company — from a venerable old standby like Davidson to an off-the-wall contender like Funnybone Interactive — can create some great software for your family. The following packages represent this year's most exciting offerings for kids (and some for adults).

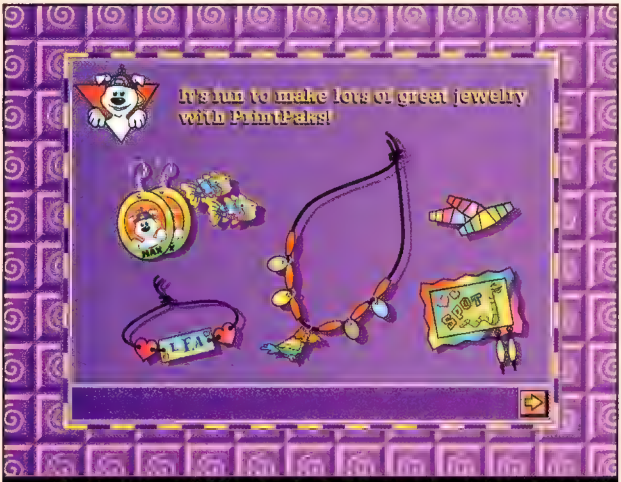
Orly's Draw-A-Story

Broderbund • (800) 548-1798
www.broderbund.com



As kids draw objects and characters for the stories in *Orly's Draw-A-Story*, Orly, a spunky kid from Jamaica, chats with them and other characters around the doodle pad.

Orly's Draw-A-Story is not just a good piece of programming; Broderbund's masterpiece addresses almost every criticism we've ever leveled at a software package. It's so good that the only thing missing from the program is more program. *Orly's Draw-A-Story* stars a spunky little Jamaican girl with an exotic accent and a wise outlook. Armed with her rich imagination, she spins some silky yarns that will entertain any child. During the stories, she pauses and asks kids to help illustrate the scene she's weaving. Using a new breed of art tools, children add a sea monster to an seascape, a castle to a fairy tale setting, and so on — then the illustrations are incorporated into the story's animation. The program encourages creativity, instills a sense of power, represents children as strong and



With Print Paks' *Super Jewelry Kit*, kids and parents can create earrings, pins, and other wearable art. Kids from all ages can get involved with making their own projects.

creative people, and offers an activity that would be impossible without a computer. All it's missing is more of Orly's stories.

Print Paks Super Jewelry Kit

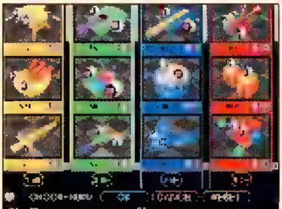
PrintPaks, Inc. • (503) 295-6564
www.printpaks.com

Print Paks packages combine friendly online instructions, fool-proof templates, and all the paraphernalia you need to produce useful, attractive projects. This year's *Super Jewelry Kit* includes shrink plastic and jewelry components with its CD-ROM. Besides its clearly written, online tutorial, the disk features a large assortment of attractive clip-art, as well as the tools you can use to import your own artwork or photos. Once you have added graphics to the jewelry templates, you print the images on shrink plastic, cut them out, and bake them in a warm oven for a few minutes. After some dramatic curling and shrinking, you have a piece of jewelry worthy of proud display. *Super Jewelry Kit* invests computer creativity with a third dimension, a real-world functionality, and an illusion of magic all thrown into one box. Like all of the Print Paks software, *Super Jewelry Kit* is a great gift for families because kids of all ages can get involved in the project. Also new from Print Paks this season, the *Super Magnet Kit* and the *Lost World Iron-On Gear* kit promise more exciting possibilities.

SimTunes

Maxis • (510) 933-5630
www.maxis.com

Appealing to many different learning styles, many different intelligence levels, and many different personalities, *SimTunes* whistles the most innovative melody you'll hear this year. Designed for kids 8 and older, the program teaches children about music and logic, using color and whimsical characters. In *SimTunes*, children compose music by placing colored tiles on the screen in various combinations, then they set loose four tune-treading bugs. As the bugs toddle across the colored tiles, they play the notes represented by those tiles. To exercise their algorithm muscles, kids use special tiles that direct bugs to various locations, kind of like a repeat sign in musical notation or a GO TO command in BASIC programming. Many other special tools allow children to refine or expand their compositions in controlled and creative ways. Whether they respond to the humor, the music, or the environment, kids will love *SimTunes*. The bugs are fun to watch, the instruments are goofy to hear, and the lessons are entertaining to learn.

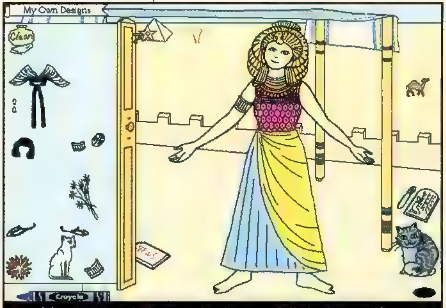


SimTunes uses a cast of bugs to represent musical notes to help kids explore the wonders of musical composition.

Crayola Magic Wardrobe

IBM • (800) 426-7235, ext. 4777
www.ibm.com

Crayola Magic Wardrobe combines paper-doll play with women's history, wrapping the lessons in imaginative play and creativity. With *Magic Wardrobe*, girls aged 6 to 12 can design and decorate costumes from several historical periods and world cultures, includ-



Crayola's *Magic Wardrobe* turns simple paper-doll play into a self-esteem-boosting lesson in women's history.

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"FLYING CORPS IS SIMPLY STUNNING"
COMPUTER GAME ENTERTAINMENT 98%

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3Dfx Logo © 1996 3Dfx Interactive, Inc.

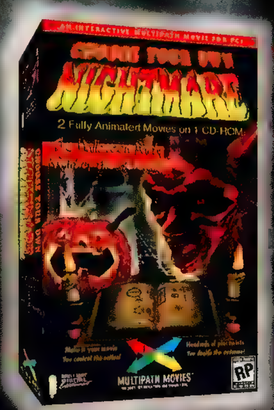
Product Information Number 147

YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE IS ABOUT TO COME TRUE...

AGAIN...

AND AGAIN...

AND AGAIN...


AN INTERACTIVE MULTIPATH MOVIE FOR PC!
CHOOSE YOUR OWN NIGHTMARE
2 Fully Animated Movies on 1 CD-ROM
MULTIPATH MOVIES
RP

INTRODUCING CHOOSE YOUR OWN NIGHTMARE,® THE INTERACTIVE MULTIPATH™ MOVIES WHERE YOU CONTROL YOUR FATE.

From the spine-tingling Bantam Doubleday Dell book series, Choose Your Own Nightmare, come two eerie, animated, 3D creature features for your PC. The Halloween Party, where "scared to death" takes on new meaning thanks to a sorceress with murder on her mind. And Night of the Werewolf, a bloodcurdling thriller that reveals the animal within us all. As the monstrous thrills and chills unfold, use your keyboard to control the plot twists. With dozens of plot paths and multiple endings, play each movie again and again until all your worst nightmares come true.

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BRILLIANT DIGITAL Entertainment

MULTIPATH™ MOVIES
YOU DON'T JUST WATCH THEM. YOU CONTROL THEM.

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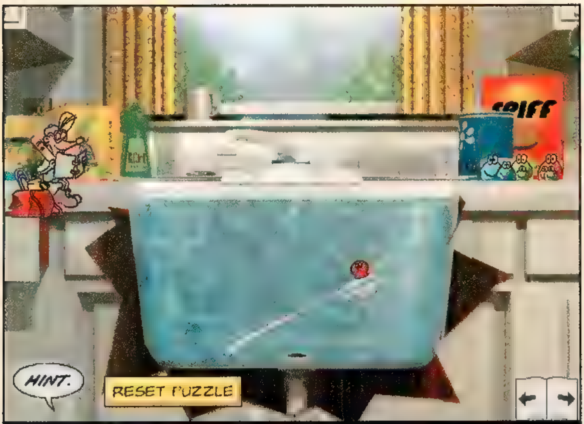
Product Information Number 110



Kids ages 8 through 12 can learn about scientific principles such as density and buoyancy from Packrat Mo in Theatrix's *Big Science Comics.*

ing Chinese, Navaho, and Hippie cultures. Other activities support this main module, including news profiles on famous women, diaries and letters from each time period, and opportunities for children to write their own entries. Everything can be printed, so the activities translate well from the desktop to the tabletop. Within months of *Crayola's Magic Wardrobe* release, the company published several other creativity packages. If the paper doll software doesn't strike your fancy, check out *Magic 3D Coloring Book*, with its unusual painting tools and its allusions to many aspects of art education. For a more universal package, try *Crayola's Print Factory* with its powerful art tools and templates for paper-based projects.

Big Science Comics

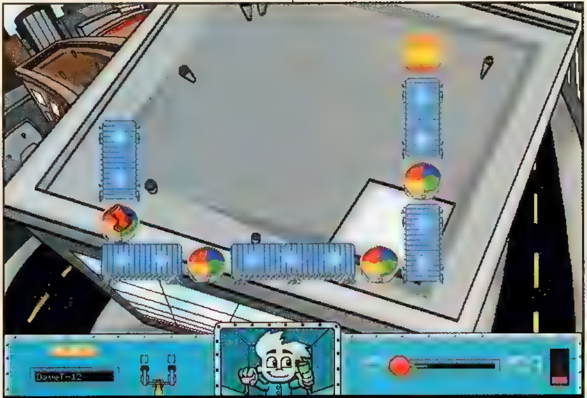
Theatrix • (800) 955-TRIX
www.theatrix.com

Theatrix has bundled the best educational software trends into one terrific package. *Big Science Comics* uses puzzles and framed story-boards to teach kids 8 through 12 years old about physics. Kids will enjoy the comic book-style graphics, and parents will appreciate the lack of comic book-style violence. The plot opens as a band of extraterrestrial blobs crash-lands on Earth. Through a series of physics experiments, the blobs repair their ship and return home. These adorable, simple blobs of color lend themselves especially well to physics problems, because they bounce, roll, bump, and float so readily. Their sizes and weights can be related to each other easily, and these vital statistics can be recorded and compared. Besides raw physics, kids learn invaluable lessons about systematic thought, recording results, and forming hypotheses. It is rare to find such a well-rounded approach to science in such an entertaining program.

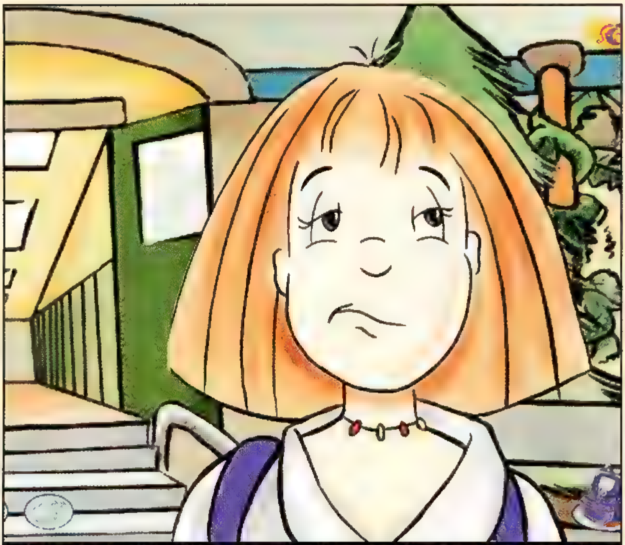
Humongous Games

Humongous Entertainment • (800) 499-8386
www.humongous.com

Sometimes it seems like it would be easier to find the Holy Grail than it would be to find appropriate, hip arcade entertainment for young kids. But Humongous Entertainment has released a refreshing collection of click-happy diversions called Junior Arcade Games. These programs combine adorable heroes with time-tested arcade designs. Putt Putt the car plays the old *Break-Out* game in *Balloon-O-Rama*, for example; and Freddi the Fish plays *Defender* in *Water Worries.* My favorite is *Pajama Sam in Sock Works*, because winning relies on planning as well as reflexes. Each of these programs is designed for a broad age range, 3 to 8 years old. Other good choices from Humongous include this year's addition to the Putt-Putt series — *Putt-Putt Travels Through Time* — and the newest series for young children — *Pajama Sam in No Need to Hide When it's Dark Outside*, both for 3-to-8 year olds. For older children, between 6 and 10, the brand-new *Backyard Baseball* offers a sports simulation with a kid-sized sense of humor and heart. Children manage their own baseball teams, choosing team members from the neighborhood all-stars. The game controls work well, and the pitches include some wacky special effects that will inspire a few giggle fits around the computer.



Part of Humongous Entertainment's Junior Arcade series, *Sock Works* challenges kids' planning skills as well as their reflexes.



In *Rockett's New School*, Purple Moon has reproduced the agony and the ecstasy of being the new girl in the eighth grade.

Rockett's New School

Purple Moon • (888) 278-7753
www.purple-moon.com

It's the first day of eighth grade, and you're starting at a new school. How do you act? Cool? Brash? Shy? Kids can try out all three approaches in *Rockett's New School*, the first release from Purple Moon. The program plays like an animated narrative, occasionally pausing for guidance from the players. At each turn of the story, children choose Rockett's attitude and watch how their choices affect Rockett's day. Designed specifically for girls 8 to 12 years old, the program was carefully developed in accordance with extensive research about girls — how girls play, what they care about, and what they don't like about computer games. The result is a game with simple controls, crisp graphics, spare animation, and a real-world story line. All but one of the characters defies stereotype, and girls will easily identify with Rockett, because they help define her personality. Although the story ends abruptly, girls can follow the characters on the Purple Moon web site until the next CD-ROM is released.

I Spy

Scholastic • (800) 724-6527
www.scholastic.com

Based on a popular series of books, *I Spy* challenges children to find hidden objects in photographed scenes.

The electronic picture book is kind of like an old sponge — and we mean that in the best possible way. Just when you think you've wrung it out for the last time, someone finds a new way to use it. The genre pretty much started the edutainment movement, and it continues to produce exciting packages. *I Spy* is a perfect example. Based on the popular paper book, *I Spy School Days*, this CD-ROM features several hunting puzzles for children 5 to 9 years old. From the Wood Block City, in which kids search through a three-dimensional image for a rhyming list of items, to Oops Hoops, in which children sort items into intersecting sets, the program is packed with beautiful photographic puzzles that teach children valuable thinking skills. As entertaining and educational as the paper-based book, this is an electronic version of a time-tested classic.

Other Electronic Storybooks

Various

Several electronic storybooks have formed a best-bets list around our library of kids' stuff

The rich landscape of the American Indians is the setting for Davidson's *Sleeping Cub's Test of Courage*, an electronic storybook about a boy trying to find his place in the tribe.

Continued on page 162

How Do You

TOP The

PERFECT

Strategy Game?

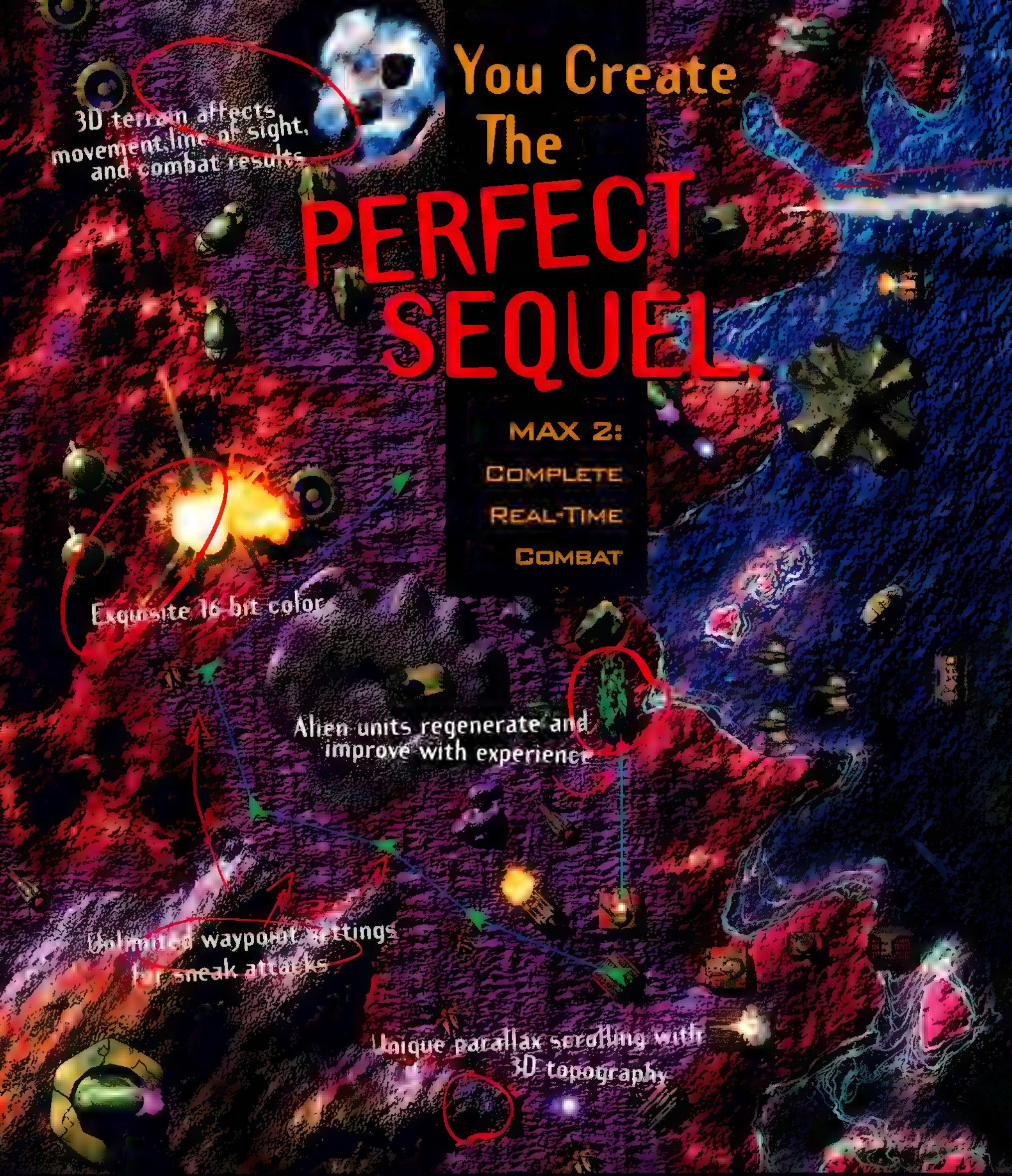
CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR M.A.X.™

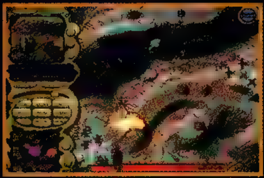
90%
Editors Choice Award
PC GAMER

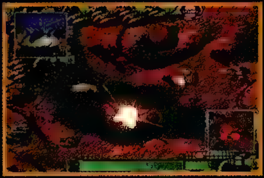
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
5 out of 5 Stars
COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

★ ★ ★ ★
4 out of 5 Stars
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

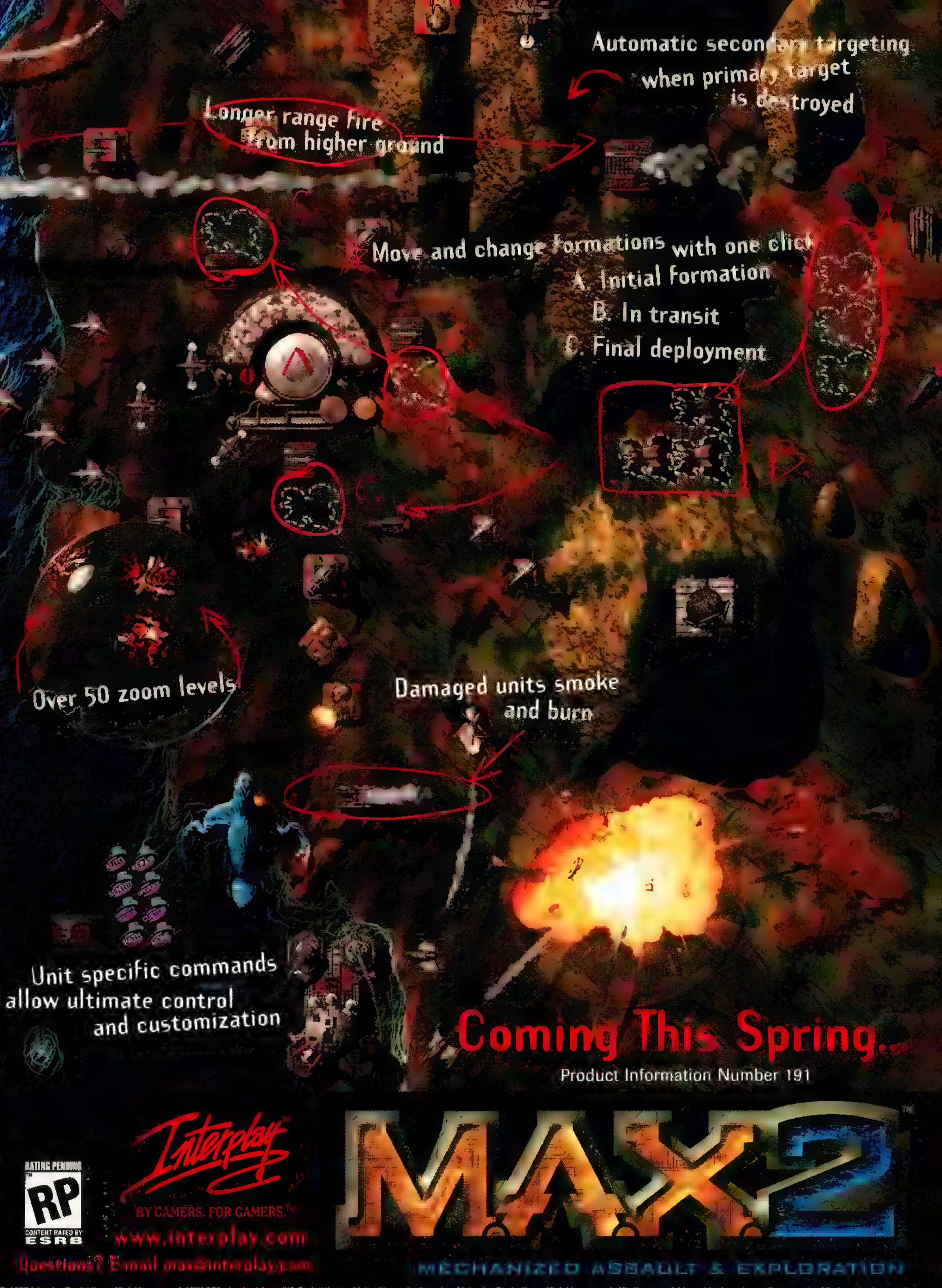
"...A True Classic In Computer Gaming!"
COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS


You Create The PERFECT SEQUEL.
MAX 2: Complete Real-Time Combat
3D terrain affects movement, line of sight, and combat results
Exquisite 16 bit color
Alien units regenerate and improve with experience
Unlimited waypoint settings for sneak attacks
Unique parallax scrolling with 3D topography





- Optional Pause To Give Orders
- Complete Scenario Editor
- Multiplayer Capability (LAN, Modem, Internet) With Alliance Building
- Simultaneously view multiple Areas of The map With The Spy Cam
- Optional turn-based gameplay


Automatic secondary targeting when primary target is destroyed
Longer range fire from higher ground
Move and change formations with one click
A. Initial formation
B. In transit
C. Final deployment
Over 50 zoom levels
Damaged units smoke and burn
Unit specific commands allow ultimate control and customization
Coming This Spring...
Product Information Number 191
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RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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MECHANIZED ASSAULT & EXPLORATION

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G.POLICE
EVER BURY THE ONE YOU LOVE IN A MATCH BOX? THAT'S ALL THEY LEFT OF HIS SISTER.
WHABOOM
FOR SLATER, EVENING THE SCORE WASN'T VENGEANCE, IT WAS SIMPLE JUSTICE.
BRAM BRAM BRAM
AND IT WAS TIME FOR THE EXECUTIONER TO DO HIS WORK.
BAROOM
SEE YOU IN HELL!
PSYGNOSIS
PlayStation
KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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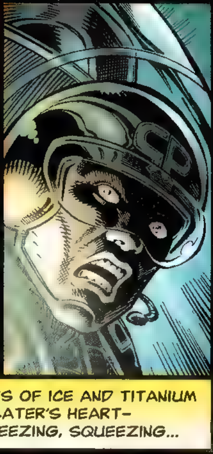
SLATER RETURN TO FORMATION!!
THERE, ON THE HORIZON!
HOLY MOTHER OF....!!
SP
BEFORE THEM, A CORPORATE WARBIRD, A FLYING CITY OF DEATH, COLD AND BLACK, WITH ENOUGH FIREPOWER TO TAKE OUT THE ENTIRE DOME.

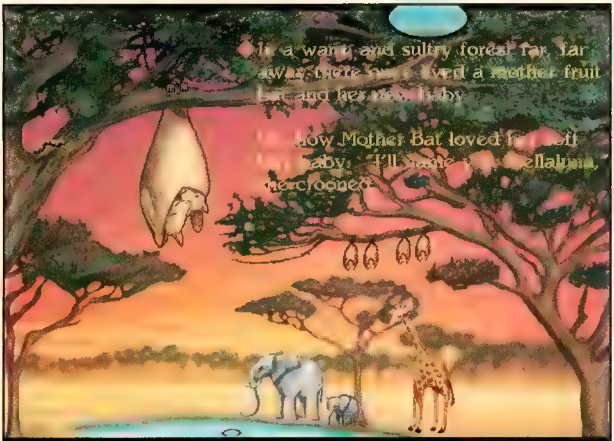
"G Police... thumb-blistering shoot-'em-up gameplay... prepare for the ride of your life." – *PC Gamer*

You are Jeff Slater, 21st Century cop. Fly your Havoc gun ship on 35 missions through 51 of Callisto's domed environments. You have fly-anywhere 360° maneuverability and tons of firepower. Serve & protect.

3-D Accelerator Card Required.
www.gpolice.com


SP
FEAR. LIKE FINGERS OF ICE AND TITANIUM WRAP AROUND SLATER'S HEART– SQUEEZING, SQUEEZING, SQUEEZING...

Product Information Number 273



In a warm and sultry forest far, far away there once lived a mother fruit bat and her new baby.

Oh, how Mother Bat loved her soft tiny baby. "I'll name you Stellaluna," she crooned.

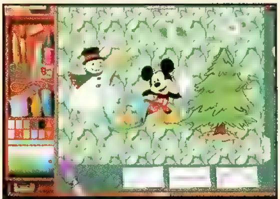
An orphan bat must learn how to survive apart from her mother in *Stellaluna*, an electronic storybook from Living Books based on the modern classic by author Janell Cannon.

this year, all aimed at the 3 to 7 age group. Davidson's *Sleeping Cub's Test of Courage* follows an orphaned Native American boy as he finds his place in his tribe; brave Raven Girl and a humorous dog named Two-Spot help Sleeping Cub achieve his quest. Also, Living Books has wired several classics for sound, animation, and charm. *Stellaluna* is a sweet story of a baby bat who becomes separated from her mother. *Stellaluna* must make a home among strangers until her mother finds her and takes her back under her wing. Besides *Stellaluna*, Broderbund has taken Living Books back under its wing with two Dr. Seuss books on CD-ROM this year. Check out *Green Eggs and Ham*, which shows how animation can add energy to the bounciest text in English literature. And lock up your goldfish and your pink-dotted dresses, because the *Cat in the Hat* has been digitized by Broderbund, too. Finally, *Hercules* came to a theater near you this summer and, soon after, to a desktop near you, too. Disney Interactive's *Animated Storybook: Hercules* features some of the voice actors from the movie as well as a selection of games.

Disney's Magic Artist

Disney Interactive • (800) 328-0885
www.disney.com

Like most kids' graphics programs, Disney's *Magic Artist* offers various creative tools, such as crayons, felt-tip pens, and paintbrushes. Some of *Magic Artist*'s tools are more exotic, though, such as the chalk and the texture board under the drawing space. In addition, each tool has a warped twin, such as the warped crayon, which turns pictures into finger paint. Dragging this weird tool across an image leaves a trail of the active color but also smears the rest of the picture into a psychedelic swirl. Combine these interesting painting tools with a wide assortment of Disney-style stamps and backgrounds — plus a series of tutorials which teach kids to draw six classic Disney characters — and you've got a sure winner with most children. Aimed at kids of all ages, Disney's *Magic Artist* has a limited scope because it focuses on Disney's signature creations. But when you're talking Disney, you're up there in the realm of chocolate and Elmo. Most kids would be pleased to hang out for a good portion of their childhood in that limited scope.

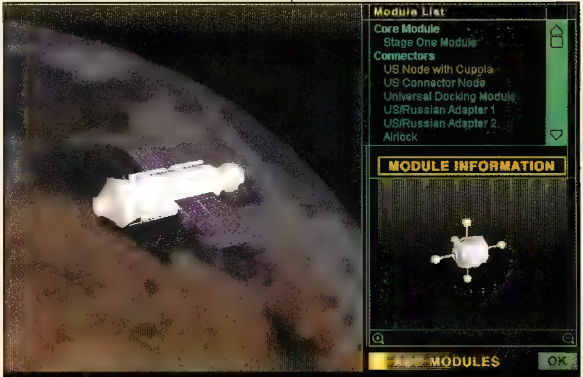


In *Disney's Magic Artist*, the warped crayon turns pictures into gooey finger paint that kids can smear into psychedelic creations.

Space Station Simulator

Maris Multimedia • (415) 492-2819
www.maris.com

From the moment *Space Station Simulator* kicks in, a hush falls over the computer room. The voices of astronauts drift through your sound card, and the mechanical music of



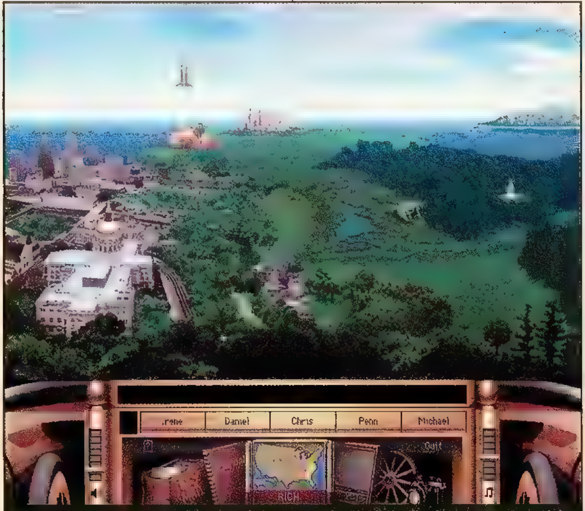
Budding engineers and wannabe astronauts can satisfy their appetites for space with Maris Multimedia's *Space Station Simulator.*

beeps, whirrs, and static turns your house into Mission Control. Maris Multimedia has transformed interesting, but technical, information into well-written prose, beautifully rendered graphics, and a fascinating construction set. The result is a box of quiet entertainment from which you can learn a great deal about the international quest for acreage in orbit. You can take a space walk, tour the existing station, study the components, visit the launch sites, or start building your own space station. Maris Multimedia has a reputation for producing sensory masterpieces, and *Space Station Simulator* measures up to this standard as well as any other Maris package. Like other Maris packages, *Space Station Simulator* combines stunning graphics and sharp sound with well-written prose, dense with data. The active interface to the content makes the program fun as well as enlightening for older children and adults.

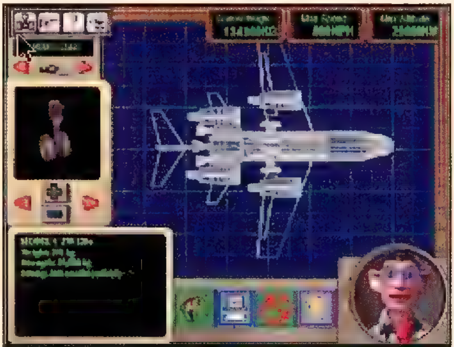
Sky Trip America

Discovery Channel Multimedia •
(301) 986-1999
www.discovery.com

With *Sky Trip America*, you can wrap up a tour of the United States for the price of a CD-ROM. Designed for kids 9 and older, *Sky Trip America* paints a stunning landscape of the United States, peppered with familiar landmarks, well-known people, and famous events. In the Deep South, for example, there's a black-velvet painting of Elvis Presley next to Martin Luther King's march for civil rights. For each landmark, there are articles, audio readings, and, sometimes, videos. For each region of the country, there are a collection of narratives delivered by famous people from various U.S. cultures, such as Irene Bedard who played the voice of Pocahontas in the Disney movie and Michael Chang who wows the world on the tennis court. Taken as a whole, the package has a nice multi-cultural flavor that adds balance to its history and geography lessons.



Take a visually stunning tour of the United States in Discovery Channel's *Sky Trip America*, a CD that is filled with historical figures and events.



Kids can explore an imaginary engineering lab with the help of Doc Howard in Discovery Channel's *Invention Studio.*

Invention Studio

Discovery Channel Multimedia •
(301) 986-1999
www.discovery.com

The Discovery Channel's *Invention Studio* invites kids around 9 and older to tinker and explore an imaginary engineering lab. Friendly invention guru Doc Howard guides children around the studio, pointing out the various workshops and test sites. The workshops include a mouse maze where you can toy with electronics to guide rodents through weird devices, a junk heap where you can recycle old machinery to make new objects, and a garage where you can build trucks and planes to test in fantastic settings. Children will love the wacky components that go into some of the projects and the space-age components that go into others. These workshops may remind you of *The Incredible Machine* or *Widget Workshop*, but *Invention Studio* structures the projects so they feel more focused and more realistic. Besides the workshops, *Invention Studio* offers a special module called the Brainstormer, which teaches children how to think through the invention process.

Curious George Early Learning Adventure

Houghton Mifflin • (617) 503-4800
www.hminet.com

Invite Houghton Mifflin's famous monkey onto

HOW DO YOU IMPROVE ON A CLASSIC?

TWO WORDS:

MORE STUFF

Nine wildly unique worlds with dozens of challenging levels.

Take on desert caverns, sky levels, sewer worlds and a whole lot more.

Stay alive with all new Super Powers–Heat-seeking tongue, Power Croak and Super Jump. You've never seen Frogger like this!

Avoid chompin' alligators, slithering snakes, biting birds and a bunch of other brand new enemies.

Play in the updated retro level and remember the good old days.

Play Multi-frog mode with up to 4 players racing in split screen at once.

www.frogger.com

HASBRO Interactive

KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation™

CD-ROM WIN.95

Frogger®

Revived, rebuilt and ready to hop.

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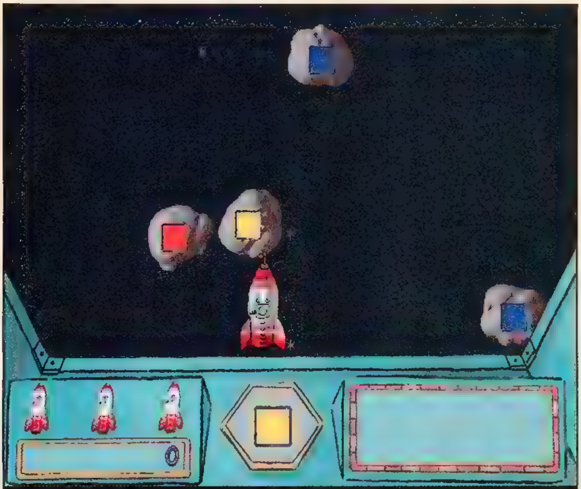
Product Information Number 170



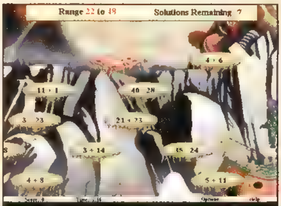
This space-blasting game in *Curious George Early Learning Adventure* combines shape and color recognition with arcade-style action.

your hard drive, and your children will find entertainment at many speeds, for many learning styles. In *Curious George Early Learning Adventure*, some activities are more educational than others, but they all offer children, 2 to 5 years old, many opportunities for success. From jigsaw puzzles to rhyming games to out-and-out reflex stretching mayhem, the program will hold your preschoolers' attention for the long run. The collection of fun and games is wrapped in a wonderful environment that is as true to Curious George's spirit as it is to his look. Few software packages imitate their characters' original sources as well as this one does. For a young child, *Curious George Early Learning Adventure* is like four gifts wrapped in one: the program teaches classic concepts, builds mouse skills, fosters friendly competition, and forms a fast friendship between the child and a popular little monkey.

Math Blaster: Ages 9-12

Davidson & Associates • (800) 545-7677
www.education.com

Davidson's latest Math Blaster game puts the emphasis on *game* as it builds quick thinking math and logic skills. Set in an alien jungle, this program challenges children to survive a hostile environment, loaded with mischievous and, at times villainous, monkeys. To win the game, kids must demonstrate videogame dexterity as well as mental swiftness, solving equations while dodging the bad guys, maneuvering through mazes, and collecting power-up jewels. Exercises encourage precision as well as estimation and calculation as well as deduction. It's hard to believe kids wouldn't catch on to the educational mission of *Math Blaster: Ages 9-12*, but my bet is they wouldn't care. With its high-quality graphics and entertaining game design, the program honors a child's sense of fun as well as a math teacher's sense of propriety. Rarely would we recommend a math program for a holiday gift guide, but in this case, the program's more fun than a jungle full of monkeys.

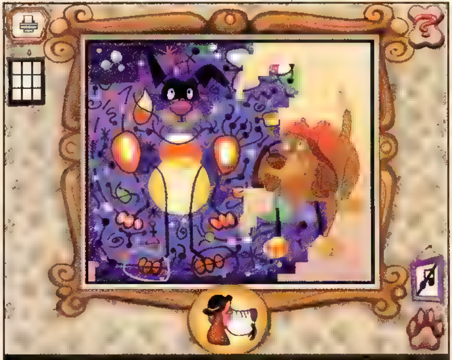


Beautiful graphics, tricky math problems, and sophisticated game play make Davidson's *Math Blaster: Ages 9-12* more fun than many traditional games.

All Dogs Go to Heaven Activity Center

MGM Interactive • (800) 586-2021
www.mgm.com

For sheer volume and variety of fun, *All Dogs Go to Heaven Activity Center* makes an excellent gift. Based on Don Bluth's animated adventure, the program offers videogames, graphics tools, dot-to-dot pictures, and other diversions for kids. All of these activities feature a dog theme, and many sections of the program include stories, articles, and other data on dogs. Any young canine fan will enjoy grooming the fleas from a dachshund in the beauty parlor or beating the pants off a bloodhound at the air hockey table. My favorite part of the program was the art gallery in which scenes from the



Among other activities in the *All Dogs Go to Heaven Activity Center*, children can uncover movie scenes repainted in the style of famous artists.

movie *All Dogs Go to Heaven* are transformed into the styles of such well-known artists as Miro and Picasso, and these transformations are accompanied by a short discussion of the artists' styles. With its sparse text and engaging activities, the program is appropriate for children 3 to 8 years old, but more sophisticated siblings will probably want to join in the fun, too.

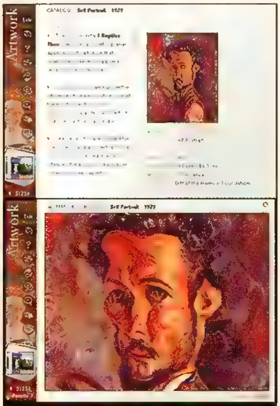
The Complete National Geographic

Pearson • (212) 641-2400
www.pearson-plc.com

Like an unexpected diamond or a surprise sports car, *The Complete National Geographic: 108 Years of National Geographic Magazine on CD-ROM*, is extravagant; at about $200, it's four times as expensive as most CD-ROMs. But this is a 24-disc set, exquisitely beautiful and rich, with some of the best non-fiction and photography the English-speaking world has to offer. As an academic reference or a work of literature, the package offers great value. Quotable articles, detailed maps, and striking photos have always been the hallmark of *National Geographic*, and they're so much easier to access in digital form. Each issue of the magazine has been scanned as a graphic, so you can zoom-in on images and text. A powerful search tool helps you find what you think will interest you most — but, then again, you never know what will strike your fancy once you start exploring the discs.

National Museum of American Art Smithsonian Institution

MacMillan Publishing • (800) 716-0044
www.mcp.com



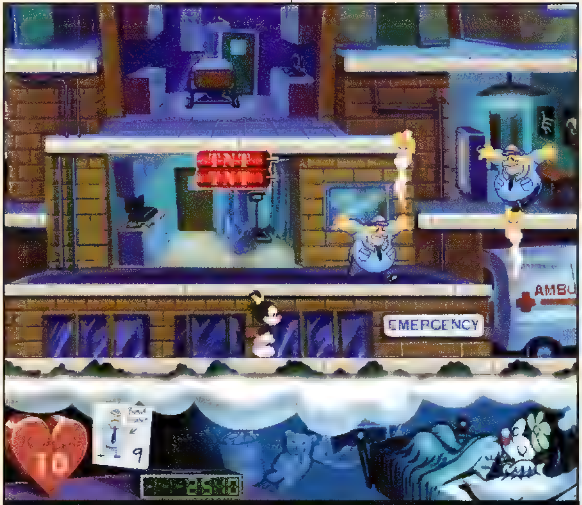
Once you find what you're looking for in the *National Museum of Art*, you can get a close-up view of the beautifully reproduced artwork.

The *National Museum of American Art CD-ROM* ships cyber-crate after cyber-crate of paintings, sculptures, and other works of art to your desktop. As a resource for students, of course, this disc will be very useful. Its in-depth articles cover biographies, influences, and techniques. As an intellectual journey, though, the disc is even more valuable. Through the various artistic movements, media, and ideas, you'll find a new way of looking at many events and attitudes that have shaped U.S. history. The beautiful works of art have been reproduced in crisp photographs, and the fascinating text is accessible through a powerful interface. MacMillan also offers *150 Years of America's Smithsonian: Discovering, Imagining, Remembering*. This disc is equally beautiful and interesting, but it draws its content from several Smithsonian museums. There's not as much depth on the topic of art, but there's more breadth on the topic of U.S. treasures.

Animaniacs Game Pack

Funnybone Interactive • (860) 693-2399
www.funnybone.davd.com

While the *National Geographic* disks are a luxurious gift for young adults and old, Funnybone Interactive's *Animaniacs Game Pack* is equally lavish for the younger set. Chasing down the 8 and older age group, the *Animaniacs* feature good-hearted fun, well-designed gameplay, and sparkling graphics. Although it has nothing to offer in the way of math mastery or reading readiness, the program has a lot to offer your kids in the way of unbridled tomfoolery. Also check out the *Hercules Action Game* for kids 8 and older. Sometimes an hour of loony-bin madness is worth a day of serious learning. Keep that in mind when you shop for software gifts — and enjoy the holidays. **PCG**



Five traditional computer games are translated into the wacky style of TV's "Animaniacs" in Funnybone's *Animaniacs Game Pack*.

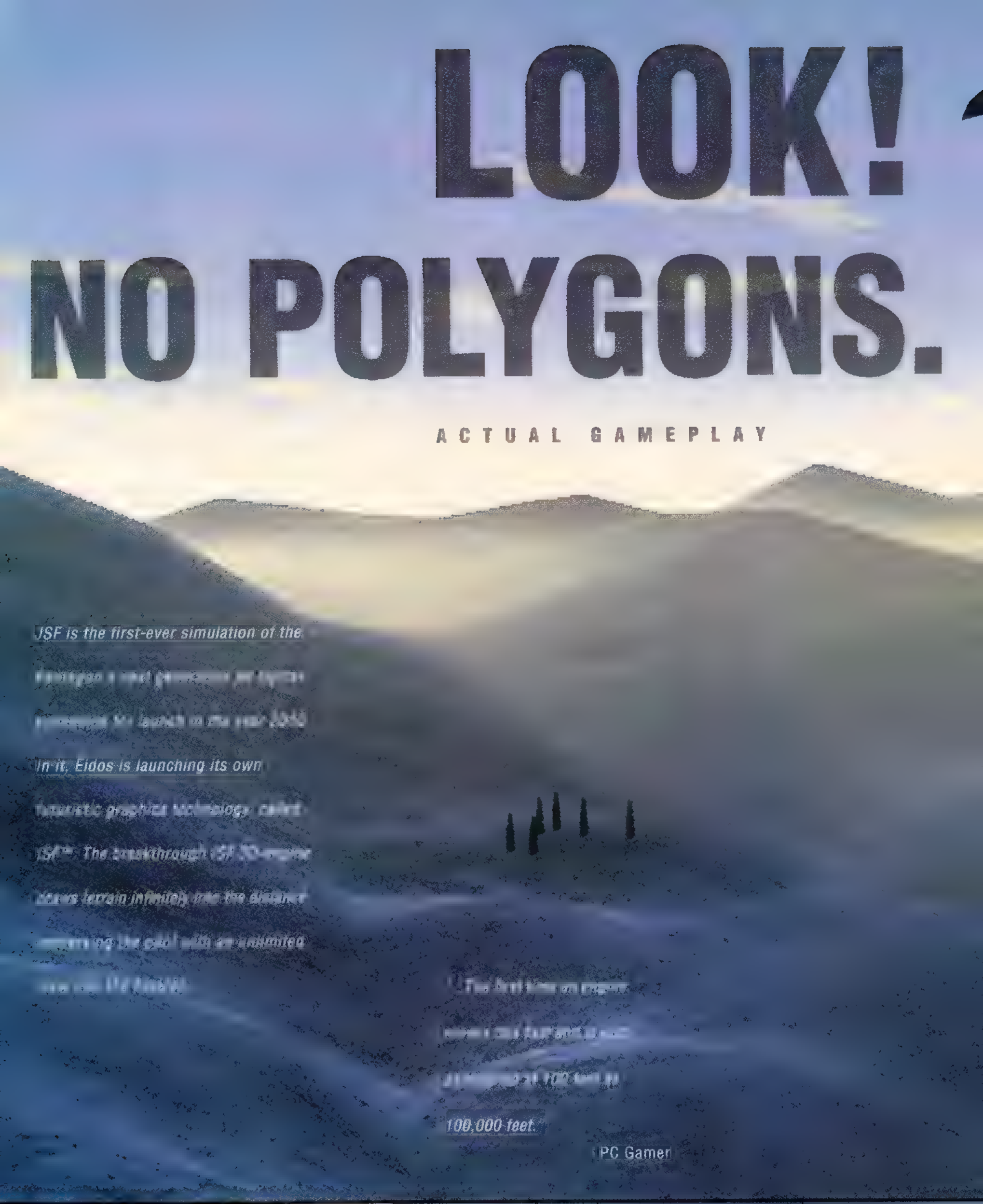
THE FUTURE
NOW.

FIRST-EVER — *To reveal the future of high-tech weaponry, including [illegible] and the Lockheed Martin Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser.*

FIRST-EVER — *To feature the [illegible] for the Pentagon's new Joint Strike Fighter: Boeing's X-32 and Lockheed Martins' X-35 jet fighters.*

FIRST-EVER — *To model over 10 million square miles of beautifully rendered terrain — the largest and most realistic terrain ever seen in a [illegible]*

FIRST-EVER — *To feature the revolutionary ISF™ graphics in 16-bit color with no pixellation (and without [illegible]*



LOOK!
NO POLYGONS.

ACTUAL GAMEPLAY

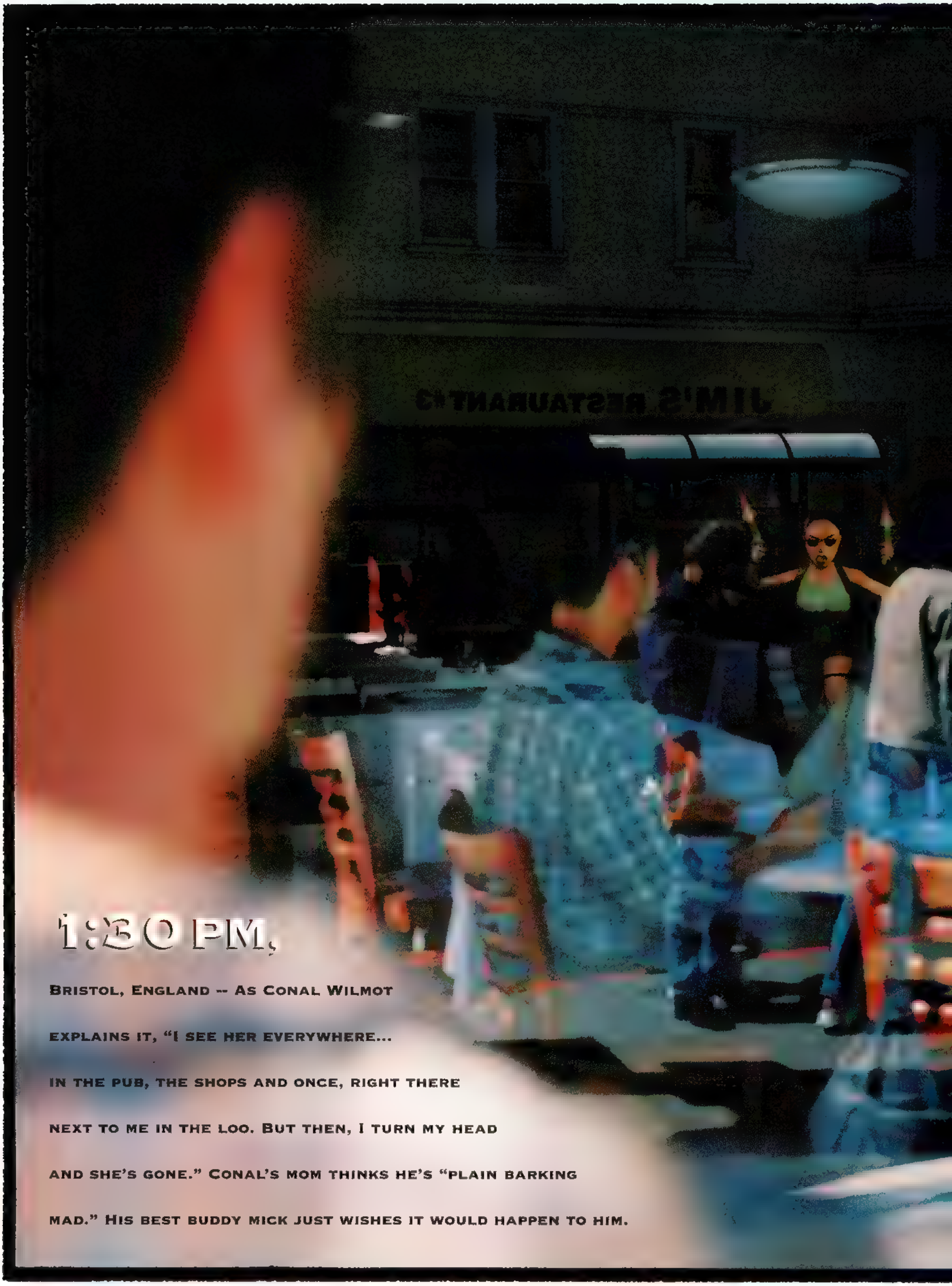
JSF is the first-ever simulation of the Pentagon's next generation jet fighter scheduled for launch in the year 2010. In it, Eidos is launching its own futuristic graphics technology, called ISF™. The breakthrough ISF 3D-engine draws terrain infinitely into the distance, rewarding the pilot with an unlimited view and true freedom.

"The first time an engine [illegible] at altitudes of 100 feet to 100,000 feet."

PC Gamer

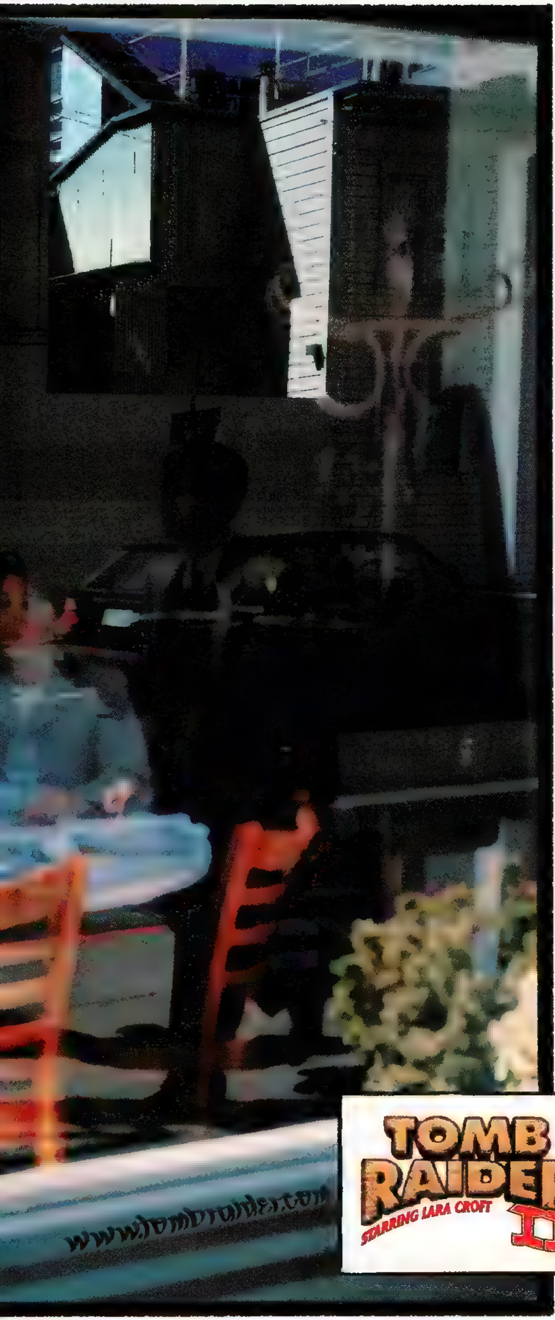
50,000 feet
40,000 feet
30,000 feet
10,000 feet
5000 f

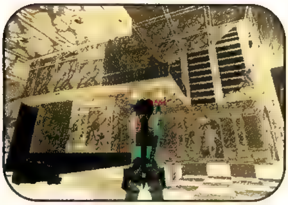
JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER
JSF
Don't just take our word for it.
See for yourself at www.eidosinteractive.com
EIDOS
INTERACTIVE
You've been warned.
Product Information Number 138
2500 feet
1000 feet
500 feet
250 feet
100 feet



1:30 PM,

BRISTOL, ENGLAND -- AS CONAL WILMOT EXPLAINS IT, "I SEE HER EVERYWHERE... IN THE PUB, THE SHOPS AND ONCE, RIGHT THERE NEXT TO ME IN THE LOO. BUT THEN, I TURN MY HEAD AND SHE'S GONE." CONAL'S MOM THINKS HE'S "PLAIN BARKING MAD." HIS BEST BUDDY MICK JUST WISHES IT WOULD HAPPEN TO HIM.





PlayStation

PC CD

EIDOS HINT LINE 1-900-773-4367. Cost of call $0.95/minute. Must be 18 years or have parent's permission. Touch-tone phone required. Eidos Interactive, Core, Tomb Raider, Lara Croft and her likeness are trademarks of Eidos, Plc ©1997 Eidos. PlayStation and the PlayStation logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Inset photo (above): Without warning, tea time becomes TR II time.

TOMB RAIDER II™
STARRING LARA CROFT

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE
You've been warned.

CORE

Product Information Number 141

If you don't do
SOMETHING…

RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
kalisto entertainment
DARK EARTH

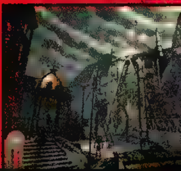
…SOMETHING will do
SOMETHING to you.

Available on Windows®95.
Visit your local retailer or call
1-800-695-GAME day or
night (U.S. or Canada).

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

You are your own worst enemy in the moody world of Dark Earth. Debris fills the air and your flesh is being attacked by a deadly virus. Poisonous clouds drift and photosynthesis has ceased. Still, it is your mission to uncover a secret history that'll help restore the one thing that can save all of humanity–light.

You'll uncover dark murder plots through real-time adventure and control treacherous combat as you interact with greedy and bizarre characters. Your foes envelop the City you protect. Whether you're there or not, they continue to prey upon you as you ponder your next move. But, there is a ray of hope–you simply have to find it. **www.darkearth.com**



Product Information Number 236

Assistant Editors We Had to Turn Down

We received a slew of mail from qualified, and some not so qualified, applicants for our recently advertised assistant editor position, but a few candidates stood out as particularly unsuitable…

DUKE NUKEM: He certainly knows the industry well, having shot up about half of it, but we found his writing style a little too, um, personal. Here's an extract from the sample game review he wrote:

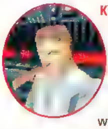
> "This game sucks compared to *Duke Nukem 3D*. The graphics are butt-ugly, compared to *Duke Nukem 3D*. There's no um, whatchamacallit, interactivity, like in *Duke Nukem 3D*. Yes, this is a sucky game, especially when compared to *Duke Nukem 3D*. *Duke Nukem 3D* is great. It rocks. I rock. Go buy *Duke Nukem 3D*."

LARA CROFT: While it would be hard to pass up the opportunity to work with gaming's top glamour girl, we found her schedule would cut into the long hours demanded of a *PC Gamer* editor.

9:00 a.m. Get Hair/Make-up done.
9:30 a.m. Flight to Yucatan out of L.A.X.
10:00 a.m. Explore ancient Mayan ruins. Shoot wolves. Recover Lost Ark.
11.00 a.m. Fly to L.A. from Yucatan. (Note to self: Will Lost Ark fit as carry-on luggage?)
12.00 p.m. Augmentation surgery

THE QUAKE GUY: The *Quake* Guy's selfless anonymity and can-do attitude are certainly pluses. But we found his command of the English language a bit lacking. Here's his phone interview:

PCG: So what qualifications do you have?
Quake Guy: Grunt!
PCG: Huh?
QG: Arrgh!
PCG: I'm sorry, could you repeat that?
QG: Gurgle, gasp, gasp, gurrrrggle aaaargh!
PCG: Er, goodbye.



KYLE KATARN: The star of *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* certainly brings a solid resumé to the table. But, as this review he wrote shows…

> "This is an exciting adventure game. But adventure, excitement, a Jedi craves not these things. In the game, you are an axe-wielding barbarian, but hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side. The game requires a lot of… What's that? Evacuate? In our moment of triumph? I think you overestimate their chances! If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine! You don't need to see his identification. These aren't the droids you're looking for. No! Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try."

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist tastes will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we can recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

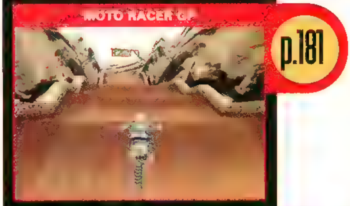
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.



Win95

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

Category: Action

Developer: LucasArts

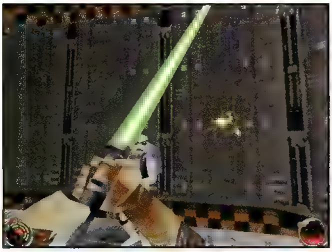
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael, CA 94192
(800) 782-7927

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133 or higher; 32MB RAM; 3D accelerator card

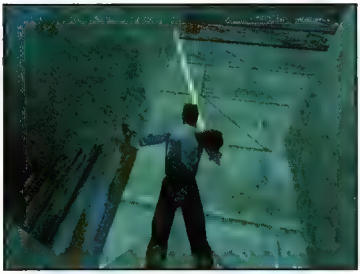
This is more than just one of the best Star Wars spin-offs, it's a new standard for 3D game design.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

When *Dark Forces* debuted in 1995, naysayers chose to see it as an example of a cynical LucasArts business model — basically, to launch a game in the genre *du jour* with the ever-lucrative Star Wars license grafted on, then sit back and watch the big bucks roll in. The slightly less sinister reality is that LucasArts has proved itself to be darned good (not to mention innovative) at whatever genre it turns its hand to, and *Dark Forces* was no mere cash-in. It was, in fact, just what a genre ruled by the mostly mindless blasting of *Doom* and its countless unimaginative clones needed — an injection of smarts. *Dark Forces* challenged the player with thoughtful puzzles and deviously-constructed environments rather than simply piling on wave after wave of bloodthirsty enemies to shoot, and it's this mind-over-splatter approach that won it a loyal army of fans, despite a few nagging flaws.



Just as in the movies, the lightsaber can be used to deflect blaster fire, even sending it back the way it came to kill the enemy who fired it!

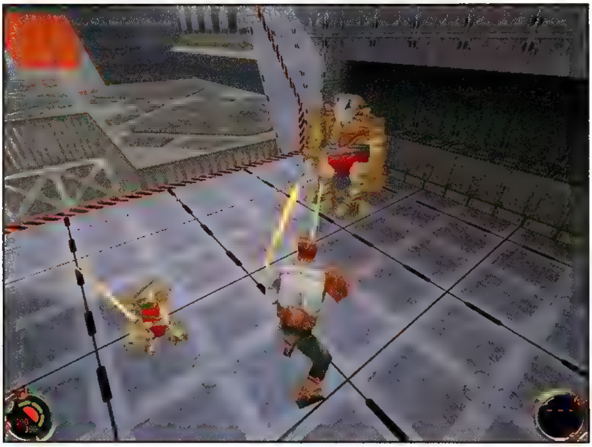


Yes, lightsabers do work underwater! There are shades of *Tomb Raider* in these underwater sequences — but just as in that game, you can't stay under for too long without running out of air.

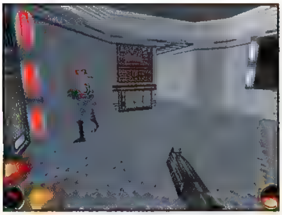
The inevitable sequel has been a long time coming, and in that time, many wondered quite what to expect, especially in the wake of some consumer mumblings that LucasArts might be "losing it" after releasing two less-than-awesome games (the good-but-not-great *Outlaws* and, more importantly, the disappointing *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*). Nobody need have worried — *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* is a triumph, and one that stamps LucasArts' authority on the world of PC gaming stronger than ever before.

Much has changed since the original *Dark Forces*, and much has stayed the same. You're still Kyle Katarn, edgy hero on the fringes of the Star Wars universe, but this time it's personal. You're out to find the man who murdered your father who, unluckily for you, turns out to be the powerful leader of a band of villainous Dark Jedi out to capture and twist the power of the Force for their own unsavory ends. So, as in *Dark Forces*, you'll infiltrate Imperial bases and shoot it up with stormtroopers, officers, and bounty hunters, but now you'll also, gradually, learn the mystic ways of the Jedi and benefit from the powers that learning gives you. By the game's epic climax, you'll be a fully-fledged Jedi Knight — although your alliegance, to the light side of the Force or the dark is for you to decide along the way.

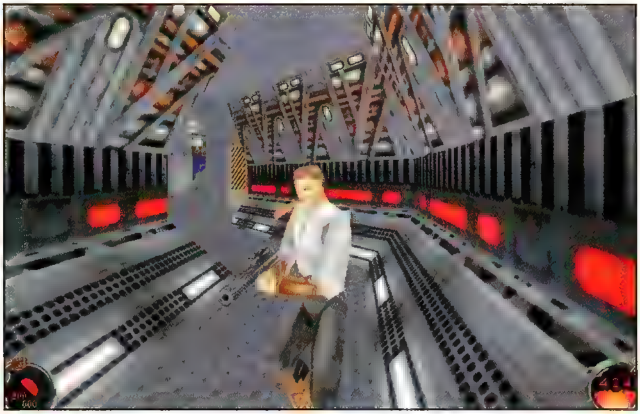
The acquisition and use of Force powers is more than just a tie-in to the



Gorc and Pic are two of the toughest Dark Jedis you'll have to fight, facing you both at once in a coordinated attack. Don't be fooled by Pic's diminutive size — he's a formidable adversary.



The Force Pull power is great for relieving Imperial officers of their blaster rifles — once disarmed, you can use them for target practice at your leisure!

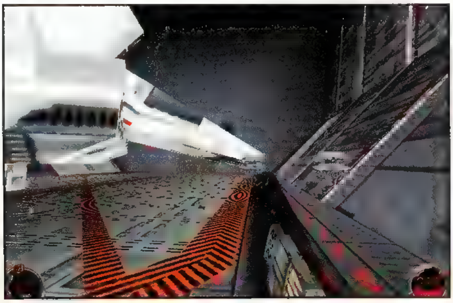


Leave your character alone for a few moments, and the game goes into idle mode, allowing Kyle to pose for the external camera.

Star Wars world — much of the game design is built around your ability to use them. Without Force Jump and Force Pull, for example, many of the areas and objects you need to get to would be out of your reach. And let's not forget that lightsaber, a feature sorely missed from *Dark Forces*, and a revelation here. More than just an offensive weapon, it can also be used to light dark rooms, cut through grates and walls to reveal new areas, and deflect incoming blaster fire. And without it, you'd have no chance against each of the seven Dark Jedi you must defeat in one-on-one combat at the end of critical levels.

Even more impressive than all this, however, is the skill and imagination with which the game's 20-plus levels have been crafted. Each one is as intricately designed as it is beautiful and immense, packed almost wall-to-wall with devious puzzles, tricks, and surprises. This is almost as much a graphic adventure as it is an action game, so cleverly and deviously have these challenging environments been designed. There's plenty of call for dexterity, too, with much precision jumping and perfectly-timed runs required to succeed — or even just survive — in many of the game's more taxing sections, where the newly-added Quicksave feature is an oft-used Godsend (just hit F9). Bottom line: if your idea of 3D fun is to blast your way through to the exit, forget it — you'll stand next to no chance here.

That's not to say *Jedi Knight* is short on action. There's plenty of stormtroopers and other miscreants to blow holes in, but the game doesn't throw them at you wholesale — it ambushes you at opportune moments, sometimes with just one or two baddies, other times with entire garrisons, where the resultant bloodshed is, for a moment, reminiscent of more visceral shooters like *Quake*. There are some great boss-type enemies too, such as the occassional AT-ST scout walker and even a TIE Bomber that, yes, does actually try to bomb you. This is where some of the game's bigger weapons, such as the railgun, rocket launcher, and repeater rifle come in handy. Ammo for these big babies is precious, but if you need more, you can always use your Force Pull power to yank a fresh weapon right out of an enemy's hands!



Don't waste time admiring that Imperial shuttle in the background — those probe droids need to be taken out, and fast.

The game is perhaps at its most atmospheric during the cataclysmic duels against the Dark Jedi. Each of the seven has its own particular style (one uses twin lightsabers, another can fly, another is two separate entities) and to defeat each requires mastery of the all-powerful lightsaber. There are only a few actual attacks at your disposal, but knowing which to use, and when, and how, is vital. These close-up battles are admirably reminiscent of Luke and Vader's duels in the Star Wars movies, where combat is frantic, most attacks are parried, and every successful strike is vital.

Learning the intricacies of lightsaber fencing is vital for survival in the game's multi-player mode too, where projectile weapons are often useless, since any Jedi with Force Pull will just suck them right out of your hands. Whether its standard DeathMatch or Capture The Flag, most kills are scored by the lightsaber in face-to-face duels that can be chillingly fast or exhilaratingly long and drawn-out. Again, your standard *Quake* skills will be of little value here — you're going to have to learn a whole new way to DeathMatch.

There's so much more to commend — the glorious cutscenes, the impressive customizability, the gorgeous graphics (particularly when boosted by 3D hardware), the redbook audio soundtrack dripping with Star Wars atmosphere — but space is short. It's amazing that an action game could be so detailed and feature-laden that it's impossible to do it all justice in a two-page review, but *Jedi Knight* is just that — the richest, most surprising, and certainly the most absorbing game I've played all year. LucasArts has pushed the boundaries of 3D gaming way back with this one, and set new standards in atmosphere, level design, and originality that all the upcoming 3D action games will be hard-pressed to meet. In the meantime, this is an instant classic.

— Gary Whitta

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

94%

HIGHS: Exemplary designed; beautifully presented; incredibly fun to play.

LOWS: It's over too quickly; those 20 levels leave you begging for more.

BOTTOM LINE: All-round, the best 3D action game to date, and LucasArts' best game since the excellent *TIE Fighter*.

Mageslayer

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: Raven

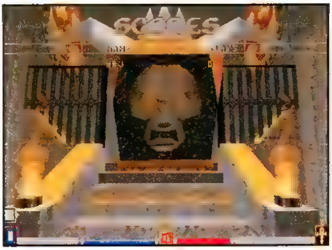
Publisher: GT Interactive, 16 East 40th
St., New York, NY 10016
(800) 434-2637

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Pentium 133; Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Grab your sword and get ready to rumble as the masters of medieval action gaming bring you a 3D *Gauntlet* with all the trimmings.

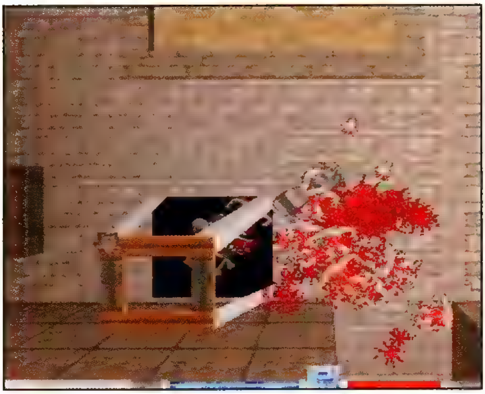
Back when I was a wee one, there were few arcade games as challenging or addicting as Atari Games' *Gauntlet*. Leading the fray as the first overhead-viewed dungeon hack, *Gauntlet* allowed up to four players to join in the fun and bring down The Big Bad Guy. Over a decade later, much of the thrill of *Gauntlet* has returned in Raven's *Mageslayer*, a hack 'n slash-fest that rejuvenates the classic in a spiffy new 3D format.

Feel free to ignore the plot — some clichéd brouhaha about an evil mage named Thane plotting to take over the universe. Just choose one of four character classes — the hammer-wielding Earthlord, the hell-spawned Arch-Demon, the fireball-slingin' Warlock, and the busty Inquisitor, and go at it. Just like *Gauntlet*, each character has a close-up melee attack and a long-range projectile — and you're going to need it. *Mageslayer* induces sensory overload by dropping in dozens of nasty monsters, all of which are on a collision course straight for you. Though they appear in spades, it's possible to destroy their source — just obliterate the monster spawners. Magical attacks are limited to the amount of mana on hand, though there's lots of the stuff spread around the levels — and once you've gained enough, you can let loose a special spell that nukes everything on the screen.



At the beginning of the game, this "square" character will give you your orders in a deep and booming voice reminiscent of Charlton Heston.

The gameplay may be derivative of an aging classic, but the graphics are anything but. *Mageslayer* is viewed from a traditional top-down perspective, but the world is in 3D, with a constantly shifting perspective. The graphics are so sophisticated, in fact, that the first time I fired up *Mageslayer*, I could have sworn that it used the *Quake* engine (it doesn't) — everything from the dark palette to the distortion of the water is very reminiscent of the id mega-hit. Since the game's in true 3D, you're able to drop down holes, ascend staircases, and ride elevators through all 28 multi-layered levels. Though the game runs at an acceptable rate on the minimum system, players with Direct3D-compliant cards will be treated to a smoother, anti-aliased version, complete with the groovy colored lighting effects the kids go ape over.



That device to your left is the monster spawner — if you blow it up, the steady stream of bloodsucking critters will be halted.

It's not all pure trigger-pumping mayhem, however. There's a little bit of puzzling in the form of switches and buttons, and you'll need quick timing to avoid crushing hammers and rotating gears. Secret doors are easy to discover — just bump into suspicious-looking walls, and you'll reveal concealed treasure troves of mana. Stealth and strategy is rewarded (especially during multi-player games) with power-ups like invisibility potions, dynamite, and proximity bombs. Unfortunately, there are a ton of those woefully tedious jumping puzzles that require touchy spatial relationship judgments, and the overhead view does *not* work well for such platform-style gameplay.

Another minor let-down is in the multi-player department, since each player needs to have their own computer (linking up four Sidewinder gamepads to one computer and playing on a 21-inch monitor would have been *really* cool). And sometimes the action gets a little *too* hot and heavy, with dozens of enemies swarming around you, consequently dropping the frame rate. There's a bit of annoyance when an overhead bridge floats in front of the camera and blocks the view of the action below, but it doesn't happen too often.

Though its gameplay is a tad dated, *Mageslayer* is a solid arcade hack-n-slash fest. If you ever blew your allowance on late-night *Gauntlet* sessions as a kid, you'll want to take this one for a spin.

—*Colin Williamson*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Nice audiovisuals; strong multi-player modes.

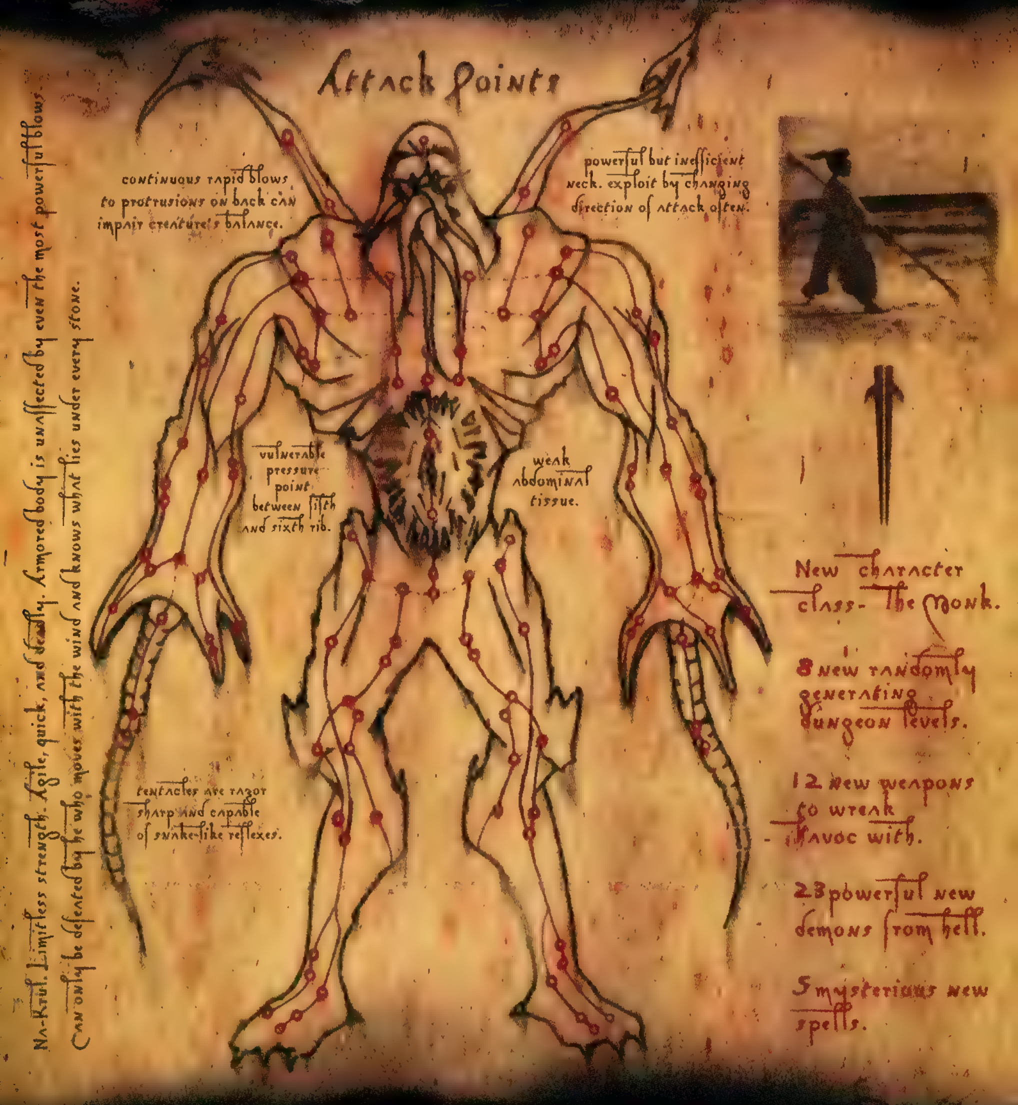
LOWS: The gameplay is just about the same as the original *Gauntlet*; single-computer co-op play would have been nice.

BOTTOM LINE: A cool throwback to a classic arcade game.

F22™
RAPTOR™
NOVALOGIC®
LOCKHEED MARTIN

Product Information Number 253

Attack Points


continuous rapid blows to protrusions on back can impair creature's balance.
powerful but inefficient neck. exploit by changing direction of attack often.
vulnerable pressure point between fifth and sixth rib.
weak abdominal tissue.
tentacles are razor sharp and capable of snake-like reflexes.

Na-Krul. Limitless strength. Agile, quick, and deadly. Armored body is unaffected by even the most powerful blows. Can only be defeated by he who moves with the wind and knows what lies under every stone.

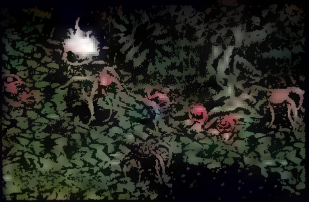
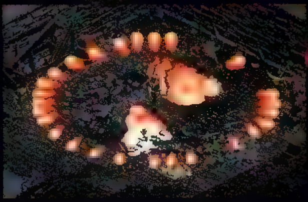
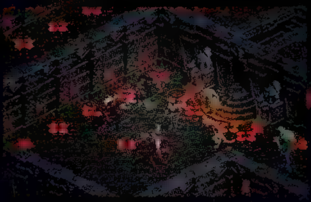
New character class- The Monk.

8 new randomly generating dungeon levels.

12 new weapons to wreak havoc with.

23 powerful new demons from hell.

5 mysterious new spells.

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Product Information Number 88

Moto Racer GP

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Arcade

Developer: Delphine Software Intl.

Publisher: Electronic Arts, P.O. Box
7578, San Mateo, CA 94403
(415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Pentium 133; 3D accelerator card; Supported sound card; Joystick or gamepad

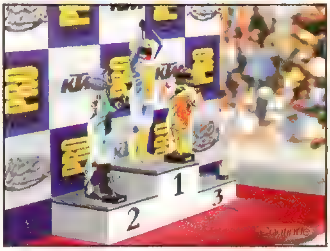
Grab your helmet and hit the track — this is the arcade racing game we've been waiting for.

Until recently, most arcade racing games on the PC have been labored by clumsy control and sluggish graphics, and even though things are getting better, the truth is that our console counterparts still enjoy dozens of quick, flashy titles that can run circles around most PC titles. Sure, we have *GLQuake* and *Diablo* to dazzle our friends with, but darn it, wouldn't it have been nice to have a truly kick-ass, beyond-anything-you've-ever-seen-before racing game that would send console tarts into convulsions of jealousy?

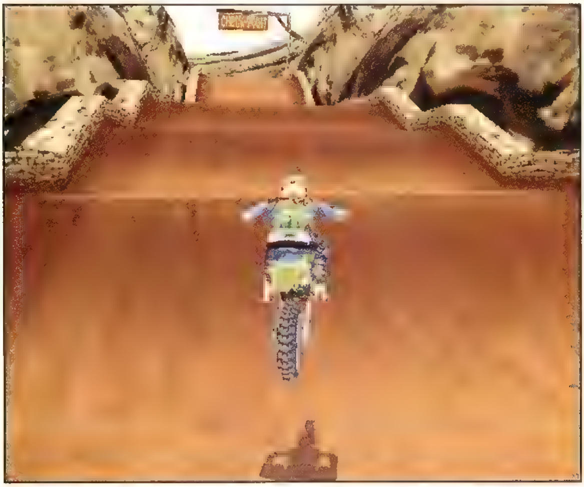
Your prayers have been answered with *Moto Racer GP*, a brilliant piece of work from French developer Delphine Software. You've seen arcade racers before, but *Moto Racer* blends together all the great aspects of the genre into an experience that redefines fun. From ultra-fast graphics to heavenly control, this game delivers on all counts.

Moto Racer features two very different styles of motorcycle racing - an off-road motocross mode and a Grand Prix mode. Though most games that attempt to do "two-in-one" rarely succeed at this two-pronged attack, *Moto Racer* deftly pulls off both modes of play extremely well.

The first things a good racing game should have are exceptional graphics and a convincing sense of speed, and *Moto Racer* delivers both in spades. Played from either a first-person perspective or a behind-the-player view, there's a genuine sense of danger as you blast down open roads and attempt to lap your opponents. The tracks add to the excitement and sense of speed with bright colors and subtle graphical touches, from circling buzzards to soaring hot-air balloons drifting lazily on the horizon. The whole shebang supports acceleration with Direct3D-compatible cards, but *Moto Racer* looks pretty damn good even without it, though you may have to do a little tweaking for an optimal frame rate.

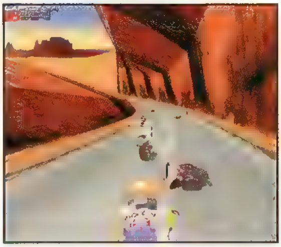


Win a race in the championship mode, and you'll be treated to this cut-scene where your opponents acknowledge that you are The Man.

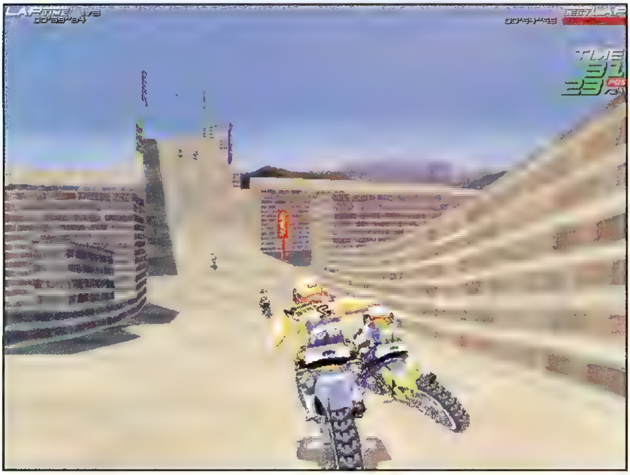


The "Lost Ruins" track features hairpin turns, rocky cliff formations, and a lot of mud.

Fortunately, control hasn't taken a back seat to the amazing visuals. *Moto Racer* is simple to pick up and play, giving new players the ability to powerslide, bank, and glide through turns like a pro. On the dirtbike tracks, there's a major emphasis on stomach-churning jumps, and you can pull off tricks that exist for the sole purpose of looking cool. The difficulty level can be toggled from easy to devious, but your opponents are road-hogs no matter which way you cut it. The amount of opponents can range from zero to 28, and it's possible to see *all* of 'em on screen at the beginning of the race — pretty



Um, ow. Running into walls and other bikers is a practice you'll want to avoid.



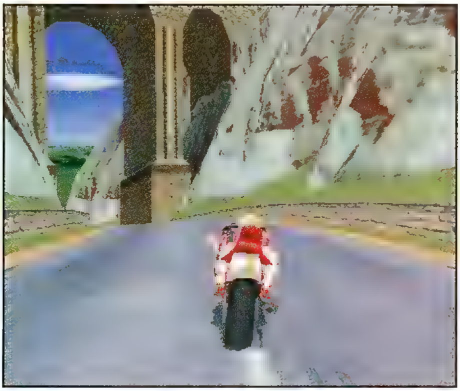
Ever want to race on the Great Wall of China? *Moto Racer* lets you fulfill those childhood fantasies.

impressive. Bumping into opponents slows both of you down, and if you hit them *just right*, you can cause a wipeout that sends bike and rider flying — often in different directions.

Though the life of an arcade racer can be extremely short (once you've beaten the tracks why bother?) *Moto Racer*'s excellent multi-player modes should keep it active for sometime to come. You can link up through an IPX or TCP/IP connection and go up against seven human opponents. Free area support on MPlayer is on its way (though it wasn't ready at the time of this review), and the standard TCP/IP play is rock solid — I raced against six people from various corners of the USA and *Moto Racer* played just as smoothly as if it were on a LAN.

Adding to the replay value are the little extras that will definitely keep you coming back. The game starts out with four tracks (two off-road and two road courses), and as you fight your way up through the championship mode, you'll unlock four more. Once you've beaten these additional tracks there are cheats to play in a "mirror mode" where you race the courses backwards, and there's even a hidden option where your racer rides a "pocket bike" the size of a tricycle.

Close-eared gamers will notice that the announcer is voiced by the painfully entertaining Christian Erickson, a.k.a. Lance Boyle from the MegaRace games. Though the game's phrase database is a bit limited, the commentary won't get on your nerves, due to tastefully sparse usage, and very little of the expected doofus-surfer-speak. The only thing lacking is the music, which lacks the energetic gutsiness of *Sega Rally* or *Daytona*.



This course lets you blast through lush valleys and pass under gigantic stone bridges. Multi-player gaming over the Internet is sure to keep the game fresh.

Also, nit-pickers may find a hint of scenery pop-in in the distance, but it's nothing that detracts from the gameplay.

All the way from the exploding configuration screens to the mini-cutscenes when you win a tournament race, *Moto Racer* captures the sense of speed, and fluidity better than any other game.

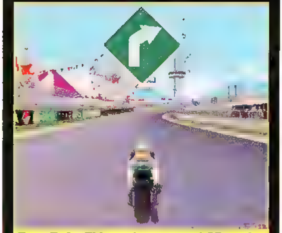
Invite your console-loving friends over, and remind them to bring a towel to mop up the drool — *Moto Racer* is a jaw-dropper.

If you have any interest in racing, you need this game — *now.*

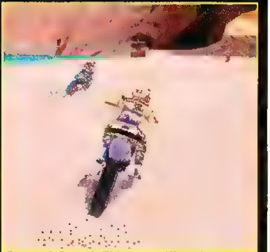
— Colin Williamson

More Moto Madness

So, you've beaten all the tracks in record time, placed first in every hidden and secret mode, and you're hopelessly in need of a new challenge. Delphine Software sympathizes with you, and has released two new tracks that are just as well-designed and eye-pleasing as the original courses in *Moto Racer*. Just go online — you can grab both tracks at either: *http://onlineclub.com/voodoo/games/vader/motorace/* or *http://home1.swipnet.se/~w-10513/8track.zip*.



Fun Fair: This novice-targeted GP track will have you cruising through a seaside amusement park, complete with track side attractions and kiddie rides. This shouldn't give you hardened bikers any trouble — the turns are gentle and unthreatening.



Sea of Sand: This one will push your dirt bike handling abilities to the limit as you catch massive amounts of air via angled sand dunes. Try not to ogle the gorgeous rock formations and the seaside view — one wrong turn or missed jump will make you thankful for helmet laws. A deep-cut trench near the beginning of the course separates the men from the boys.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

91%

HIGHS: Great graphics with or without 3D card; dead-on play; sensational multi-player racing.

LOWS: There's an itsy bit of scenery pop-in on some courses.

BOTTOM LINE: A dynamite package that blows away the competition.

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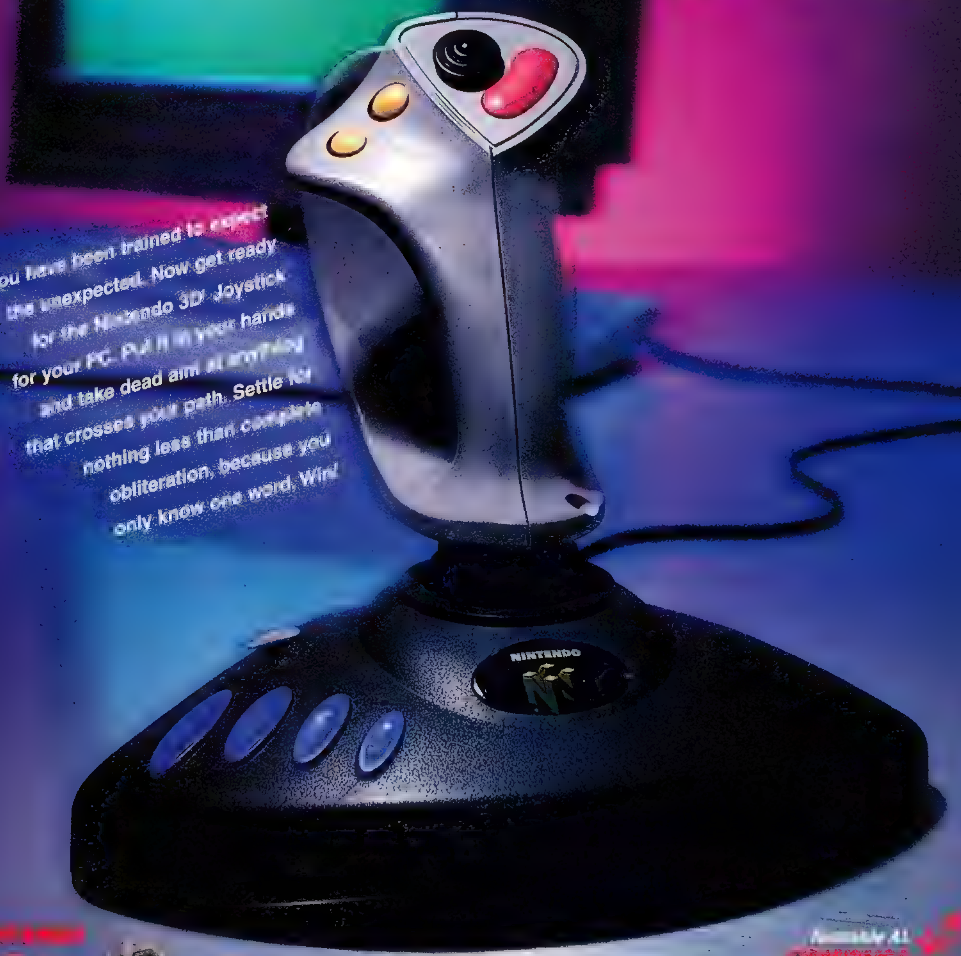

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Dark Reign

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

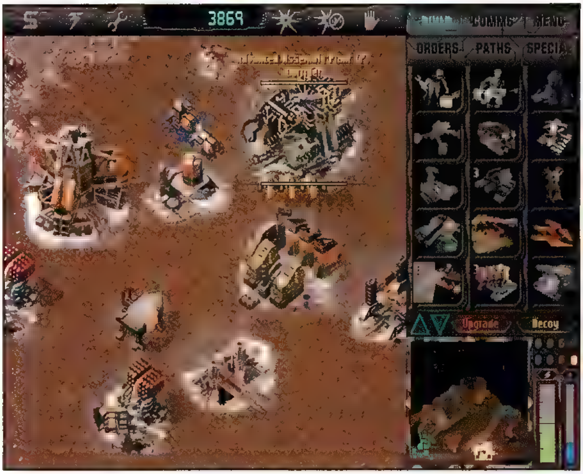
Category: Strategy

Developer: Auran

Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 255-2000

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 2x CD-ROM drive; P90; 16MB RAM; 130MB HD space; Local-bus SVGA card; Win95-compatible sound card; Mouse	4x CD-ROM drive; P120; 32MB RAM

Activision's real-time strategy game sets itself apart from the crowd in so many ways.



The Build menu on the right-hand side of the screen lets you issue construction orders for more than one unit at a time. When the Assembly Plant finishes the Outrider it's working on, it'll produce one more, then create three phase tanks, then three shock wave generators.

When computer gaming historians (assuming such an animal ever exists) look back on the last few months of 1997, they'll probably call it the Era of Real-Time Strategy Games. It's October as we go to press, and we've seen the release of at least seven new games in the genre over the past month.

Of course, they're all the spawn of *Command & Conquer*, *WarCraft*, and their sequels. *WarCraft II* and *C&C: Red Alert* were two of the top-selling games of all time, so naturally the rest of the industry has jumped onto the bandwagon in the hope of duplicating that success.

Problem is, most of these me-too products are just that; they add little or nothing to a formula that's become very familiar to gamers. And game developers are kidding themselves if they believe they can come within a mile of *Red Alert*'s or *WarCraft II*'s success without bringing anything more to the table than a new setting or prettier graphics.

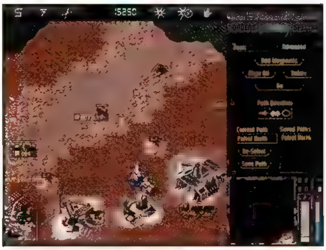
Activision's *Dark Reign: The Future of War* is one of the few new real-time strategy games that attempt to make significant improvements to gameplay. Like every other real-time strategy game, *Dark Reign*'s basically about constructing bases, collecting resources, building armies, and wiping out the enemy. But its promise is one of stronger artificial intelligence — not just for the computer-controlled enemy units, but for the player's own troops — and for the most part, it delivers on that promise.

It's pretty gratifying to send a group of tanks to the edge of an enemy base and watch them attack the nearest building; turn and defend themselves when enemy units come within range; go back to their work when the threat has been eliminated; and even peel off from the group and head for a repair station when their damage reaches a specified level — all without being told to.

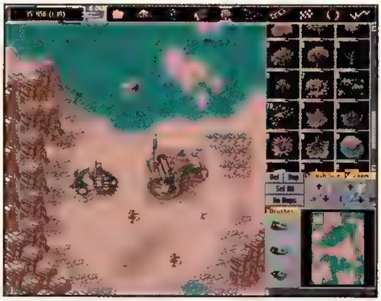
In addition to putting you in command of some fairly clever troops, *Dark Reign* gives you a few ways to customize their behavior to suit changing situations. An Orders menu lets you determine how far out of its way a unit will go to pursue an enemy it spots; how much damage it will take before heading to a repair station or field hospital; and how free it is to ignore your orders and go after targets of opportunity. If you're fighting a slow battle of attrition against an enemy base, you may want to give your troops low damage tolerance and high independence, so they'll take themselves out of the fight for repairs and live to fight another day; on the other hand, high damage tolerance and low independence will make your troops stand fast and guard a strategic position at all costs.

You can also use the Orders menu to send a unit or group on a Scout mission (exploring the battlefield and finding enemy units and structures without attacking them); a Harass mission (exploring the battlefield, attacking enemy units, and withdrawing before they can fight back); or a Search and Destroy mission (finding the enemy and attacking until one or the other is destroyed).

A sophisticated waypoint system lets you create routes for your troops, guiding them around enemy installations or setting them on patrols around your base.



The Paths menu lets you set up complex waypoint routes for a unit or group. Here, a group of Freedom Guard skirmish tanks is given orders to patrol a newly established base.



Dark Reign's editors give you some powerful tools for creating new maps and scenarios — or even new buildings and units.

You can give a unit or group of units a one-time route with a few clicks of the mouse, or you can use the Advanced Paths menu to save routes you'll be using frequently. Once a route is saved, you can send any unit or group along it later. Finally, you can set an "exit point" anywhere on the map for every factory or training center turning out new vehicles or troops; when a new unit is created, it automatically heads for its exit point — a great way to quickly mass your forces at a staging area.

It's all a far cry from earlier real-time strategy games that forced you to closely watch all of your units and constantly click, click on their little heads just to be sure they weren't doing anything foolish.

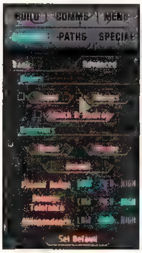
Enemy units seem reasonably smart, too — more than once, I've seen an enemy scout approach a group of my tanks, then turn tail and run when it realizes it's badly outnumbered. And I've had the computer-controlled enemy destroy a bridge I was using to send troops against its base, then mass troops nearby to keep me from rebuilding it; I ended up having to build a new bridge elsewhere and defend it with two big gun turrets. *Dark Reign* doesn't represent the kind of revolutionary leap in enemy AI that could really bring new challenges to the real-time strategy arena — then again, neither do any of the other new games in the genre. The computer will occasionally do some silly things, like sending light tanks two-by-two against a heavily defended base, but it's generally an improvement over the AI we encountered in previous games.

Of course, the downside of giving gamers something good is that we only want more; the fact that *Dark Reign* gives us smarter soldiers (and so many ways to control them) just makes the game's few omissions seem more glaring. It would've been really useful, for instance, to be able to tell one group of units to escort and protect another group. It'd be nice to give newly completed units a waypoint path they could automatically follow when they leave the factory; the "exit point" feature is better than nothing, but since troops tend to take the shortest route to it, they sometimes get themselves into trouble. And while it's great to have badly damaged troops automatically go for repairs, it'd be better if they didn't occasionally take a path that led them deeper into enemy territory to be destroyed. It'd also be nice if repaired units automatically went back into battle, rather than sitting idle just outside the repair station or field hospital.

The single-player campaign is about what you'd expect: a series of loosely linked scenarios that become increasingly difficult. One nice touch is that you can play any single-player mission as the Freedom Guard or the Imperium. If you hit a brick wall in one mission, you don't have to give up or resort to cheat codes; you just go back and try it from the other side's point of view, where you'll have different objectives and possibly better luck.

Dark Reign's multi-player action is strong, supporting two players via modem and serial link; four players via the Internet; and as many as eight on a local-area network. Any open slots in a game can be filled by computer-controlled players. As with *Interstate '76* and the MechWarrior games, Activision has set up its own *Dark Reign* server, so you can play over the Internet without paying an online game service.

An Instant Action option similar to *Red Alert*'s skirmish feature lets you practice your multi-player chops against one or several computer opponents of varying skill. As released, the game has a bug that confuses the three difficulty levels: Hard is labeled as Easy, Medium is labeled as Hard, and Easy is labeled as Medium. Activision will probably have a patch available by the time you read this, but you'll still need to download it and apply it. Meanwhile, don't choose an "Easy" game unless you're ready to be trounced.



Using the Orders menu, you can determine how your units react in battle or give them simple missions they can carry out on their own.

Dark Reign could've done more; it could've made the units under your command even smarter, and it could've given you even more control over them. It doesn't have the quite the personality of its best-selling predecessors: it lacks the humor and creative spark of *WarCraft II*, and there's no strong, unifying story as in *Red Alert*. But it's a good, solid real-time strategy game with some intriguing innovations, a good single-player campaign, some very strong multi-player action, and amazing customizability — all of which make *Dark Reign* one of the two or three best games to come out of this season's real-time strategy wave.

—Dan Bennett

Going Tactical

Reigning Your Own Worlds

Dark Reign is based on Auran's Tactics Engine, a new engine made specifically for real-time strategy games. The Tactics Engine's watchword is versatility, and *Dark Reign* takes great advantage of that with what has to be the most powerful set of editors ever included with a strategy game.

Dark Reign's Construction Kit lets gamers create their own multi-player maps and single-player scenarios by "painting" terrain; tweaking elevation to create hills and valleys; laying down rocks and trees; placing buildings, units, and resources. Also included is a Unit and Building Editor for altering existing units and structures or creating new ones; an Artificial Intelligence Profile Editor that lets you tweak the behavior of every unit in the game; an End Condition editor, used for defining mission objectives for your own single-player scenarios. The Construction Kit and editors are the same tools Auran used to design every mission and map in *Dark Reign*, and they're powerful enough that a hard-working gamer could conceivably use them to create an entirely new game.

Already, new missions and construction tips are showing up on Activision's web site (*www.activision.com*). Even more interesting stuff is available at Auran's site (*www.auran.com*), where new terrain types, buildings, and units are available for download — they're being developed for a new Tactics Engine game, but you can use 'em in *Dark Reign*, so they're worth a look.

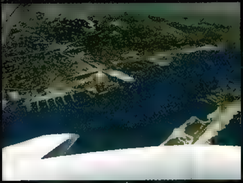
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Smarter units; more control options; good multi-play; excellent editor.

LOWS: Units occasionally make bonehead moves.

BOTTOM LINE: *Dark Reign* should have no trouble distinguishing itself from the current flood of *WarCraft* and *C&C* clones.



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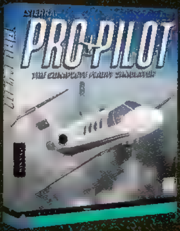
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Product Information Number 305

Hexen II

Category: Action

Developer: Raven

Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire
Blvd., Ste 1000, Los Angeles,
CA 90025 (310) 473-9200

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 120MB hard-drive space	Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx card; Supported sound card

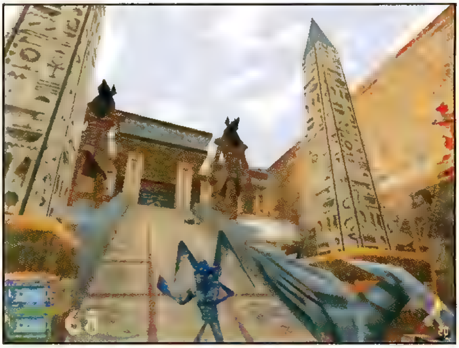
Hexen II gives you the single-player gameplay *Quake* never had, but there's a price to pay.

Here's the skinny: before the coming of Eidolon, the most powerful Serpent Rider, Thyrion was a peaceful land. Now, each of its four nations (Blackmarsh, Thysis, Mazera, and Septimus), is under the yoke of Eidolon and his generals: the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. You must traverse these four nations in order to kill Eidolon and his horsemen.

In the process of ridding Thyrion of evil, you will pass through vistas of amazing detail and beauty. The worlds of *Hexen II* are, without question, the most elaborate, realistic, evocative, and gorgeous ever created for a 3D game. Built using id Software's *Quake* engine, they are the highlight of a gaming experience that sometimes flags, but never loses its visual power.

Hexen II immerses you in a world like no other. Like its predecessor, it is based around the concept of "hubs" rather than levels, so it feels more like a real world. One level and world flows into another, and you can (and must) go back and forth between them. This is infinitely more satisfying than the "rush through level, hit button, go to next level" school of *Quake*. There are four hubs altogether, each with multiple levels. Each hub represents one of Thyrion's unique nations, and has unique architecture and design.

Blackmarsh is a mediaeval world with stained glass windows, spires, castles, and soaring gothic arches. Thysis evokes ancient Egypt, right down to the pyramids, obelisks, hieroglyphs, and sarcophagi. Ancient meso-America is the impetus for Mazera, with its Mayan symbology and stepped pyramids, while columnated ruins dominate the Greco-Roman land of Septimus. These worlds feature bright hues and unique textures that lift *Quake* out of its brown-rust drabness and into an explosive world of colors and expansive vistas. Size is impressively conveyed, and animated scenery takes your breath away. A windmill turns slowly under a blood-red sky. Statues shoot intersecting rays of light. A catapult lobs a sheep over a castle wall in a delicious Python-esque moment. Water is translucent and lights flicker. Many of these effects are available even without a 3Dfx card, but with one, the smoothness and detail is unsurpassed.



Soaring architecture characterizes the nations of *Hexen II*, such as this Egyptian-themed level in Thysis.

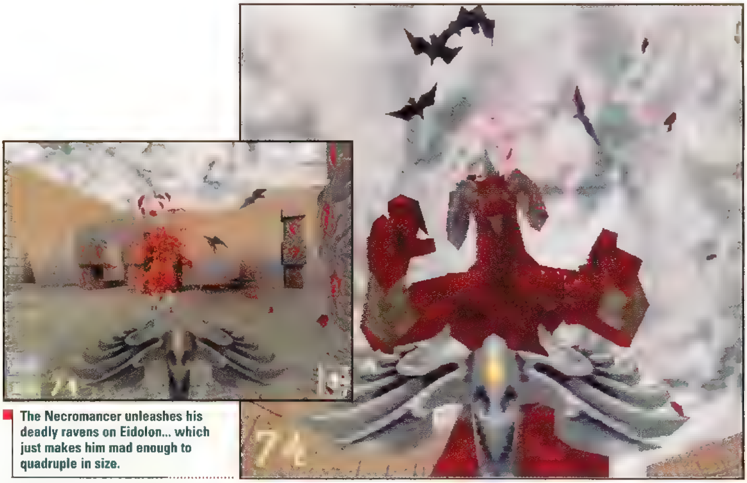
Monsters are equally impressive, with more frames of animation than any other 3D game. A wide array of special creatures inhabit the worlds, with mummies, were-jaguars, and medusae adding to the overall level style. The monsters have superb detail and unusual attacks. A favorite is the mummy: if you cut off its arms, it kicks you, if you cut off its legs, it bites you. (The Raven boys watch way too much Monty Python.) The fluid, detailed animations of the horsemen (which end each hub) must represent some new high in monster creation. Only Eidolon is a bit of a let-down. He has the usual heavy-duty boss attack, and even quadruples in size when hurt, but for all that he's a rather conventional-looking

Who Are You?

In *Hexen II*, you can play one of four characters, each with their own skills and weapons. When used with the Tome of Power, each of these weapons has a second attack. The modified attack appears here in brackets.

CRUSADER: Possibly the most well-rounded character, the Crusader can heal himself at certain desperate moments and take on super-human power by collecting spheres that sometimes appear when a monster is killed.
WEAPONS: Warhammer — melee (throwing weapon), Ice Mace — single ice bolts that freeze an enemy (ice storm with multiple shards), Meteor Staff — fires boulders (whirlwinds filled with rocks), and Lightbringer — burning rays of light (increased power).

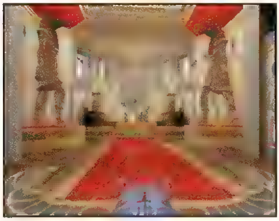
ASSASSIN: The Assassin relies on stealth, and can sneak up on enemies to land the first blow. When standing still, she is practically invisible: a skill that becomes better as she increases levels.
WEAPONS: Katar — curved dagger (attack with toxin for greater effect), Crossbow — fires three bolts (fires five flaming bolts), Grenade — bouncing explosives (increases in power, fragments), Staff of Set — fires a powerful blast (spirits of the staff excoriate the target).



The Necromancer unleashes his deadly ravens on Eidolon... which just makes him mad enough to quadruple in size.

demon (think Tim Curry in *Legend*). And, after the big showdown where Eidolon is, literally, cut down to size and killed, you get the lamest of all possible cheese screens. A few scrolling lines of text for all that effort seems like a cruel joke.

Up till now, I've dwelt upon the visual aspects of *HII*, because they are ground-breaking and impressive. Just being able to wander through these worlds would be fascinating, but of course a game needs more than pretty visuals to stand the true test, and here is where *Hexen II* delivers mixed results. We all know that *Quake* had no true single-player gameplay elements: It was pretty much a frag-fest (though more than a year after its release, it still excels at this). *Hexen II* does have a single-player game, but it is often frustrating and ill-conceived.



Paging Indiana Jones? A pair of statues shine a light on the action in the throne room.

Like *Hexen* and to a lesser extent, *Heretic*, the puzzles of *HII* involve running around and backtracking. A lot. Since the levels are semi-continuous (there is a loading pause between each), you can run back and forth all you want, and you'll need to. You need to go through several levels to get an object, then backtrack to bring it somewhere else. Clues are sparse, and inventory is limited to power-up objects. I was baffled by the whole "Bones of Loric" thing at first. I found the bones, but they never appeared in my inventory. It turns out that I had them anyway, and needed to "grind" them into dust. This is done by standing in a puddle in the windmill (?). That gave me the dust, which was still not in my inventory. At some point, the dust was needed and was used, but where, when, or why was a mystery.

This is the crux of the problem in *HII*. Not only do you have to backtrack constantly, but clues to the puzzles are sparse or hidden. There are a number of puzzles where you need to push buttons in a special order, though this was a matter of trial and error. (If I want to push buttons in order, I'll wait for *Riven*.) Hidden rooms are not just for extra goodies: they are essential to progress. This, and the search for any puzzle-solving clues, turns *HII* into a pixel hunt. It's also almost essential to shatter every window and bookcase to make sure there are no hidden rooms behind them. This becomes tedious. The final nail in the gameplay coffin is the lack of an automap. With so much backtracking and hidden areas, a map is not an optional feature.

There is still much to like in *HII*, even with its gameplay failings. One thing that may determine its shelf-life is whether or not people take to its unusual multi-player mode. With so many spells and objects, close-quarters combat, multiple character classes, and complex levels, *Hexen II*'s deathmatches tend to be much more sophisticated and demanding than Quake. A multi-player match can tend to get terribly unbalanced, as people collect objects from victims and quickly turn into unstoppable forces. It takes some getting used to.

As a pure example of world-creation and state-of-the-art action gaming, *Hexen II* is a show-stopper, but a little more attention to the nuances of gameplay would have guaranteed it a place among the all-time greats.

—*T. Liam McDonald*

PALADIN: Though he's a holy man like the Crusader, the Paladin is a better fighter. He can move and fight underwater the same as on land. Like the Crusader, he often gets a boost when near death, turning berserk and killing with unusual power.

WEAPONS: Gauntlets — melee (super-powered), Vorpal Sword — melee (ranged attacks via lightning), Axe — melee, also throws off a shard that cuts down everything in its path (multiple shards that do much damage), Purifier — throws a twin stream of shards (shoots guided fireballs).

NECROMANCER: The magic-wielder of *Hexen II*, he collects soul spheres to tap their energy and drains vitality from enemies with his staff.

WEAPONS: Sickle — melee weapons, saps vitality (extended potency and range), Magic Missiles — fiery projectiles (fires three at once), Bone Shards — throws a hail of shards (concentrates shards into a single, shattering blast), Raven Staff — blast of energy (unleashes a swarm of deadly ravens).

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Stunning level graphics, textures, monsters, and special effects.

LOWS: Spotty level design. Too much running around. Some questionable puzzles. No automap. Long load times.

BOTTOM LINE: A visual treat with plenty of action and killing, but some frustrating gameplay elements.

20th Century Trivia Challenge

Category:	Trivia
Developer:	Corinthian TV/Telstar Elec. Studios
Publisher:	Sir-tech Software, P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 393-6633

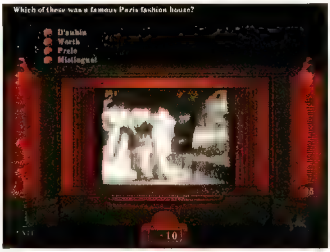
Required	We Recommend
2X CD-ROM drive; 486DX/66; 16MB RAM; Win 3.1 or higher; 16 bit sound card; Super VGA; 10MB free hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Windows 95

The British are coming! And they brought a trivia game with them that just can't seem to do anything right.

It used to be you would know just what you were getting when you played a trivia game: pointless video clips, dreary hosts, and multiple-choice questions that were more interesting to history teachers than trivia buffs. But a couple of years ago, a little game called *You Don't Know Jack* changed all of that. With a funky design, musical interludes, and humorous questions delivered by a quirky host, *You Don't Know Jack* became the standard by which all other trivia games are now measured. Which is unfortunate for *20th Century Trivia Challenge* because it falls way short of the mark.

20th Century Trivia Challenge was created in Great Britain and uses archive video footage and pictures from British Pathe News and the BBC. Pathe News has one of the largest archives of historical film footage in the world, and the game uses Pathe as its focus. The Pathe News rooster logo is used throughout, and the game is set up like you're in a movie theater watching old newsreels. Round One of the single-player game has 40 questions that you must answer in a certain amount of time, and you have "lives" represented by the Pathe rooster; once you miss four questions, your "lives" are gone and you move on to the second round, which is essentially the same as the first except played at a quicker pace.

There are major problems with gameplay throughout. Most important to American players is the fact that this is a British product, which means that most of the questions focus on British history, politics, and arts. If you've been searching for a game that features questions about Cliff Richard, this is the one for you. (For those of you who don't know who Cliff Richard is, our British friends tell us he was kind of like an English version of Elvis.) Most Americans won't know and won't care about the majority of the questions, unless you happen to know what Margaret Thatcher's maiden name is and who led the British forces during the Falkland Islands conflict



Which of these was a famous Paris fashion house?

D'aubin
Worth
Prele
Mistinguet

Although it's interesting to see footage from the Pathe News and BBC archives, sometimes the image quality is so poor that you can't tell what's going on.

Another problem is that you only get four lives in Round One, which means that you will probably never finish the whole round because the questions are so hard. Well, actually, the questions aren't that hard — how many Americans were killed by friendly fire in the Vietnam conflict, for example — but the answers are structured so that it's hard to make an educated guess. The choices for the answer in the Vietnam question were something like 36,800, 36,267, 36,340, or 36,912. Now, you may know that around 36,000 Americans were killed by friendly fire in Vietnam, but do you know the *exact* number? We didn't think so. Half the fun of any trivia game is making an educated guess and then finding out that you were right, but you don't get the chance here.

At least you'll find out the correct answer from the host in Round One; in the quicker Round Two, the host doesn't even bother telling you what the right answer is. And while we're talking about the host, let's just say that this guy will get on your nerves — he uses a booming BBC voice in an attempt to be funny, but the result is not the least bit amusing.

20th Century Trivia Challenge's biggest strength is the Pathe News and BBC video clips and pictures, which are fascinating glimpses at the past. You'll see snippets of everything from an interview with Alfred Hitchcock to the Hindenburg crash. However, when we say snippets, we mean *very* short clips. Sometimes these clips don't properly relate to the questions; other times you'll see the same video clip used for several different questions (If I see Frank Sinatra coming off a plane one more time....) But as interesting as the 500-plus clips might be, they're simply too short to be of any real value.

In the end, *20th Century Trivia Challenge* does almost everything wrong. Even if we were history teachers instead of game reviewers, we'd still consider this product a stinker. Heck, if we were history teachers, we'd let our students play *You Don't Know Jack* — they'd probably learn a lot more and have a hell of a lot more fun doing it.

— *Lisa H. Renninger*

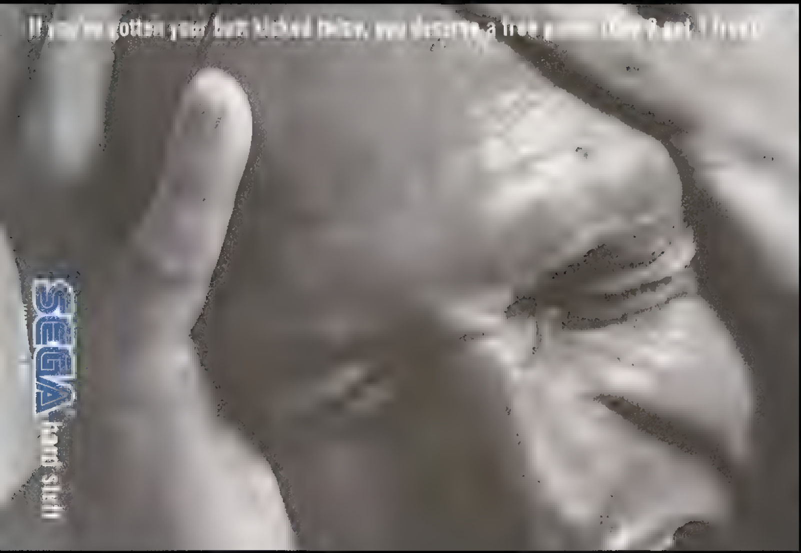
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

23%

HIGHS: Some good questions; pretty interface.

LOWS: British-related questions and humor will be lost on American audiences; questions and too-short video clips repeat quickly.

BOTTOM LINE: Not worth your time or money, even if you are British. It's just plain bad.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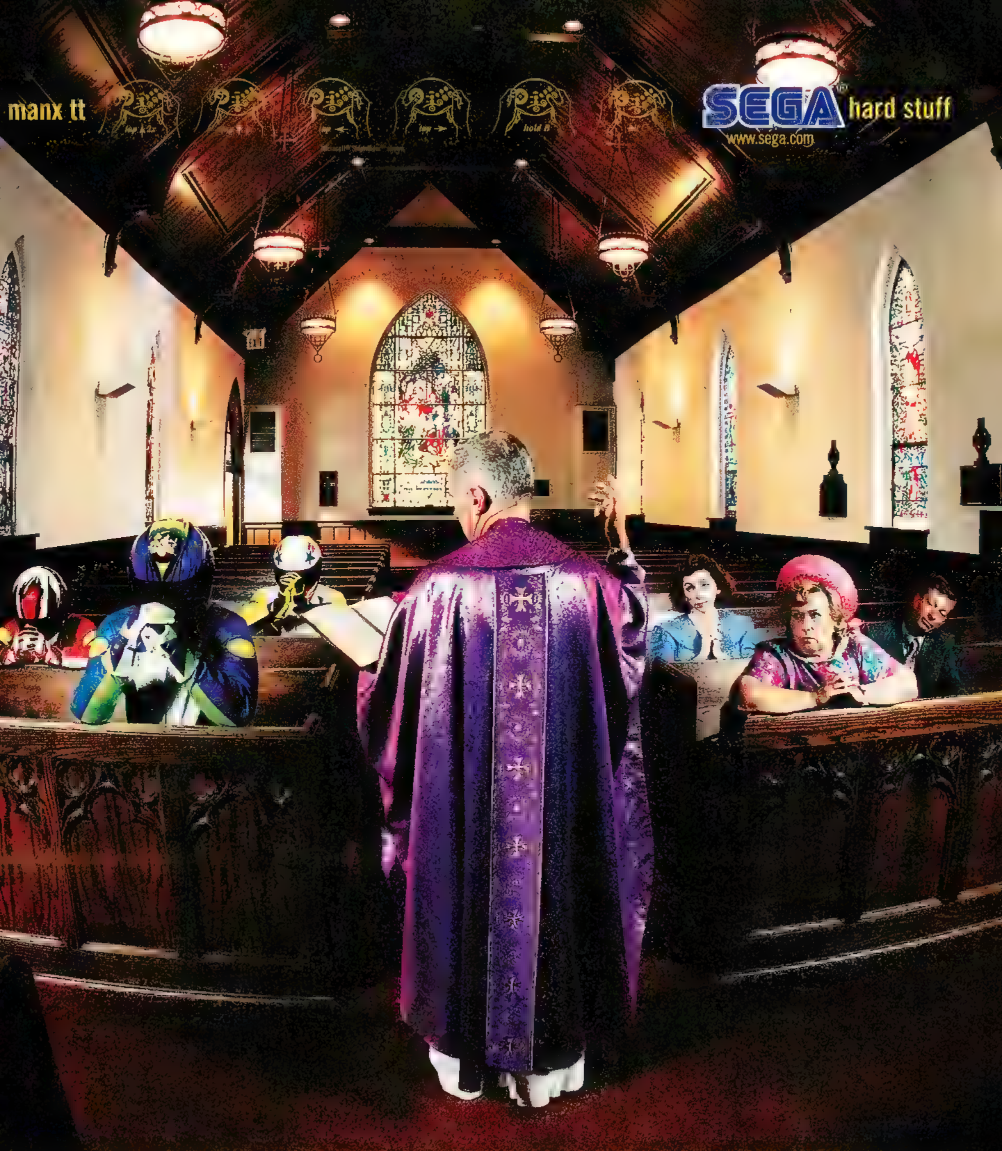

Pray to the motorcycle gods. Manx TT, the killer arcade game, is now on PC. Pick from 8 custom-built SuperBikes. Gun it down one of the most treacherous race tracks on the planet, England's Isle of Man. And try not to scrape your knees off through the turns. Just so you can feel it all in your gut, we've recreated every last bump and dip on the road. Equipped with 8-player Network Play over IPX and TCP/IP so you can race other speed freaks across the country. **Get down on your knees.**

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Product Information Number 231

Shadow Warrior

Category: Action

Developer: 3D Realms

Publisher: GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016
(800) 434-2637

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; SVGA	Pentium 133; Supported sound card

The creators of *Duke Nukem 3D* bring forth a fun chop-socky action-fest that isn't all that politically correct.

In the real world, ninja were the slimiest link in feudal Japan's food chain — thugs who collected a paycheck from The Man in exchange for assassination and extortion. But never mind what the history books say; that has nothing to do with ninja the way we Americans like 'em — highly-trained martial artists armed with only a sword and stylin' black pajamas who battle demonic hordes. That's the kind of ninja you play in *Shadow Warrior*, the last big-name game created with *Duke Nukem 3D*'s Build Engine.

You play as the deadly ninja Lo Wang (keep your comments to yourself, please), a feared assassin and tool of the Yakuza. Lo has made a mistake somewhere in his business dealings, and his main employer, Zilla Enterprises, has put a price on his head. But even with undead warriors surrounding him and stockpiling a huge number of weapons, you can put your money on Lo to cause some serious destruction.

Lo's adventures begin in the Dojo of Death and progress through just about every clichéd Asian location you can think of, from bathhouses to pachinko parlors. Unlike *Duke Nukem 3D*, the full version of *Shadow Warrior* adds only one extra episode (consisting of 18 levels) to the shareware. So the game's a little on the short side, but the levels are huge and exceptionally well designed.

The Build Engine may be on its last legs, but *Shadow Warrior*'s designers have made some tweaks that keep things unpredictable. Multi-level buildings abound, and now two levels can be visible at the same time. Water can be transparent (although this slows down the action, even on a P200), and several rooms reveal reflections in polished floors. Finally, sections of a level can change their angles and rotate at will; this is put to good use in the final level, when the big boss stage keeps shifting, ready to drop Lo into a pit of lava if you're not quick with the keyboard. You get all that without 3D acceleration (a 3Dfx patch has yet to appear as we go to press).

The big innovations in *Shadow Warrior*'s gameplay are the vehicles and turrets Lo can climb into and control. It's now possible to hop into a tank and drive around, shooting or squashing anything in your way. While this is a total blast in multi-player deathmatches, there are still a few problems with getting stuck in corners, and I've had the game crash on occasion while I was trying to maneuver a speedboat through a section of water.

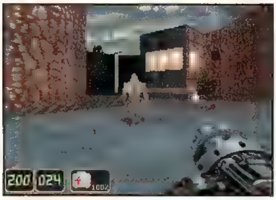
Monsters are still the standard flat

And now for some ...

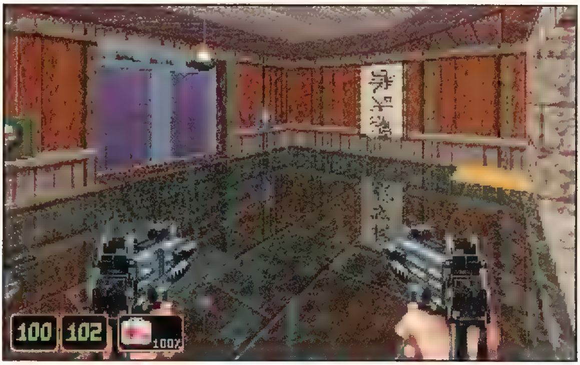
Controversy!

FEW THINGS can garner more attention (and sales) for a game than public outcry over questionable content. One dubious rumor has it that *Shadow Warrior* began as an authentic ninja-action game until someone theorized that the hubbub about strippers in *Duke Nukem 3D* had resulted in several thousand extra sales. Ka-ching! Enter Lo Wang and a host of Asian stereotypes.

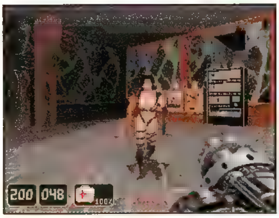
Of course, that rumor is almost certainly untrue. Yes, there's plenty here to offend your sensibilities if you're looking to be offended. Lo Wang is a Chinese name, even though the hero is supposed to be Japanese, and assassins don't use snappy one-liners, and millions of real Asians have never been to a bathhouse or pachinko parlor, and the phrase "Kowabunga" originated on the *Howdy Doody Show*. But *Shadow Warrior* isn't an Akira Kurosawa epic — it's a tongue-in-cheek tribute to cheesy ninja B-movies. It's not to be taken seriously, any more than *Redneck Rampage* was intended as an accurate depiction of rural Southerners... y'all.



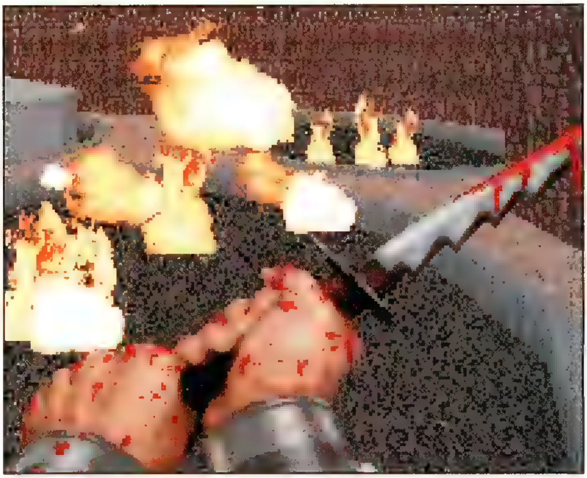
It's the corporate campus of Zilla Enterprises. There are plenty of vehicles to drive around in, and lots of oil barrels that blow up real good.



Lo Wang stumbles upon a puzzle room just baffling enough to keep you interested.



She's clad in leather, and she carries a crossbow. One lewd remark, and you're history.

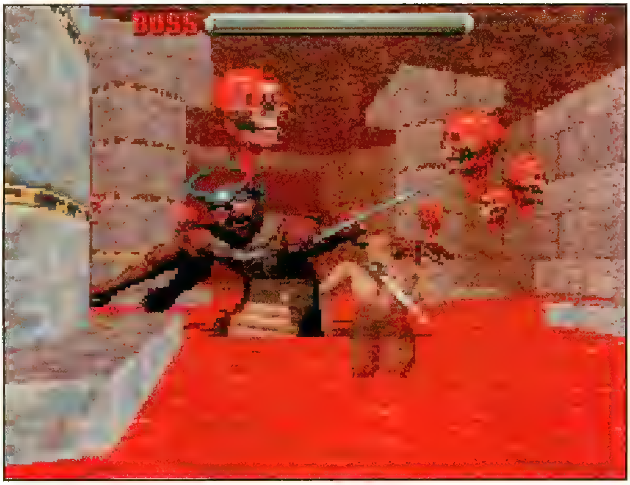


How about a little fire, Scarecrow? Blowing up Zilla's oil reserves is a snap if you've got a missile launcher — just be sure to keep yourself out of the way of the blast.

bitmaps. Most of them don't look as good or have quite the personality of *Duke3D*'s pig cops and octabrains, but their behavior is nicely unpredictable — after spurting blood and falling down, they may stagger back up for another round, or even toss a flash-bomb to blind you temporarily. 3D Realms' preoccupation with scantily clad women continues unabated, but a strange kind of political correctness has snuck into the mix — try using a pick-up line on any of the naked gals hidden throughout the game, and they'll plug you full of lead. There's probably a lesson here, but I'll be damned if I know what it is.

The end-level bosses are a mixed bag. The Snake God at the end of the shareware episode looks blockier than a Lego festival, but the Grand Sumo midway through the second episode is much better-looking (well, he's larger and more repulsive, which is the point). Unfortunately, Zilla himself is pretty disappointing, looking like a reject from *Voltron*. Worst of all, *he gets away at the end!* What a crock....

Of course, it wouldn't be a true 3D action game without a mind-numbing collection of firepower. Lo Wang's arsenal contains everything from bare fists to rail guns to more mystical weapons. One of the most effective ways of killing your enemies is using a ripped-out human heart, which produces a railgun-wielding doppleganger of yourself when squeezed. The star of the show, however, is the nuclear warhead — it may take five seconds to power up, but once you launch that sucker, kiss everything that's visible goodbye (including yourself, if you don't make tracks). There are lots of other little goodies, like smoke bombs that render you partially invisible, the standard night-vision goggles, and gas bombs that can fumigate an area.



This big, pixelicious snake-guy shoots flying demon heads at you. Dodge 'em, or you're toast. You have your pick of mind-numbingly powerful weapons to fight back with.

Unlike in *Duke3D*, there are some pretty tricky puzzles to get past. You can't just use a cheat code to make yourself invincible and expect to muscle your way to the finish. You'll have to leap from moving platform to moving platform; shoot out machinery; and fiddle with water levels *Dark Forces*-style to make it all the way through.

Like *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Shadow Warrior* supplies some excellent multiplayer action. The tanks and turrets combine with the wide selection of sneaky ninja-toys to create a new deathmatch experience. Unfortunately, play over the Internet is officially limited to TEN, thanks to another of those blasted exclusive contracts — but you can get it running under Kali with a little tweaking. For those of us who don't have 'net connections, the standard network, serial link, and modem connections are supported.

Though it's a little bit short and about as politically correct as Al D'Amato's Lance Ito impression, *Shadow Warrior* is a respectable follow-up to *Duke3D*. It won't win any awards for innovation, but you should feel no guilt about enjoying a little Wang now and again.

—Colin Williamson

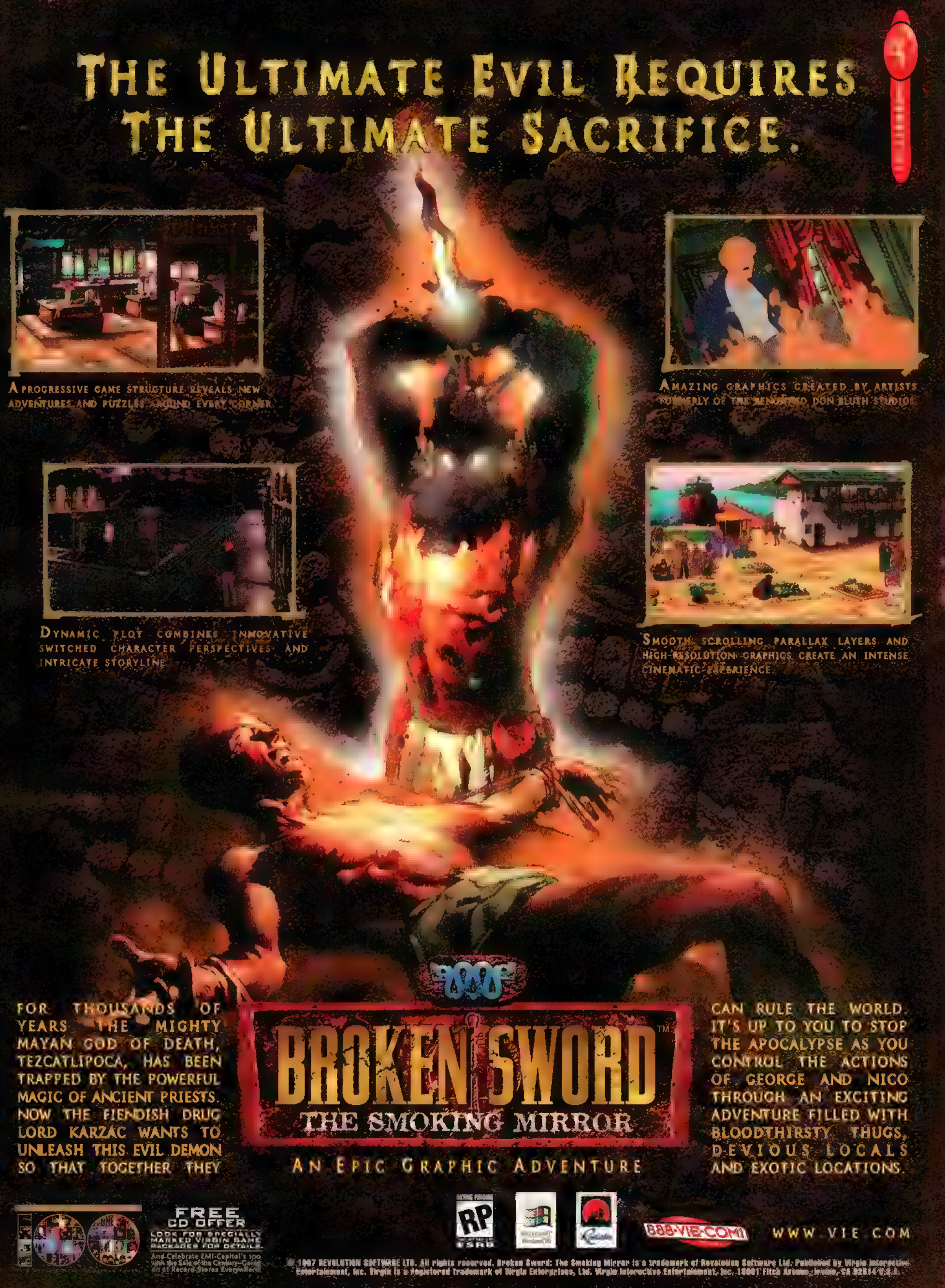
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great level design, lots of personality.

LOWS: It's still basically *Duke3D*, and the limited number of single-player levels mean it's pretty short.

75%

BOTTOM LINE: It's not revolutionary, but it's worth a gander for anyone who enjoyed *Duke 3D*.



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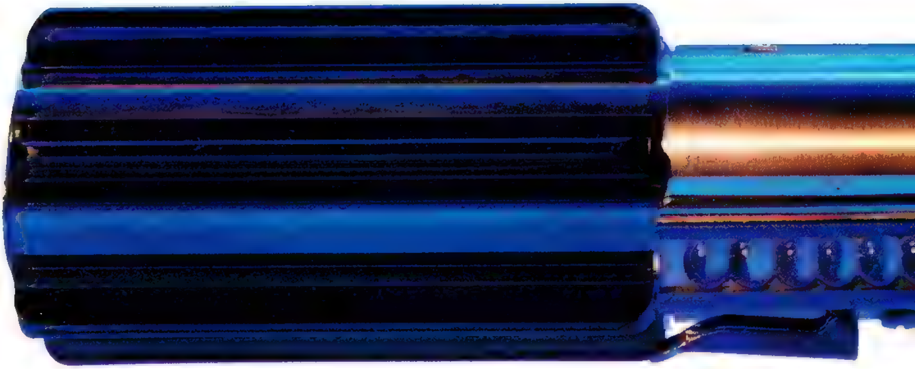
Product Information Number 364



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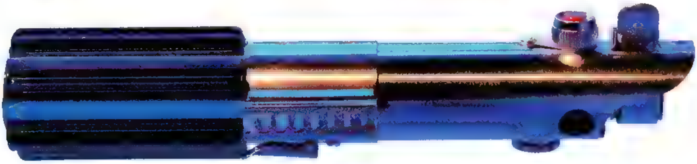

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JEDI KNIGHT
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Product Information Number 227

Take No Prisoners

Win95

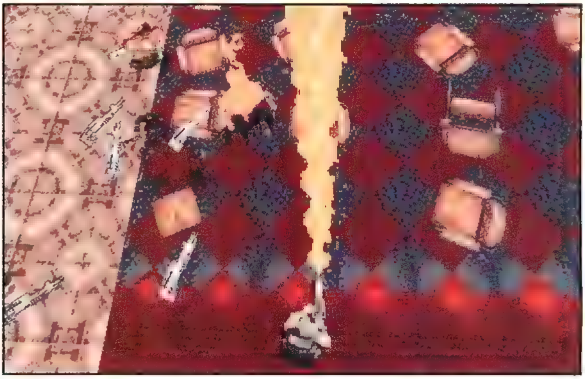
Category: Action

Developer: Raven Software

Publisher: Red Orb Entertainment, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 (800) 474-0485

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Pentium 90; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space; Sound Blaster 16 or compatible sound card	Pentium 166; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 32MB RAM; 216MB hard-drive space; Supported 3D accelerator card

A new perspective creates new problems in this otherwise uninspired 3D shoot-'em-up from Red Orb.



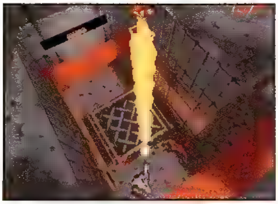
Take No Prisoners uses a top-down perspective to put a new twist on its familiar 3D shoot-'em-up formula. It really limits how far you can see in front of you.

Describe *Take No Prisoners* to a friend who hasn't seen it, and he'll think you're talking about yet another first-person 3D shooter like *Quake* or *Jedi Knight*. The game certainly has all of the trappings of this crowded genre: Shoot everything that moves; run around picking up weapons, ammunition, armor, and health packs; and work your way through a convoluted series of levels to reach your final goal.

Take No Prisoners even has the requisite bare-bones story line to set the background for its non-stop mayhem· You play as Slade, a macho, trash-talking hero in the tradition of Duke Nukem; your mission is to make your way through the post-holocaust ruins of San Antonio, Texas, and investigate what's going on inside a mysterious blue dome that has appeared in the middle of town.

The major difference is that *Take No Prisoners* isn't played from the usual first-person view. Instead, you see the game from a third-person, top-down perspective, as if you were hovering above and slightly behind Slade. Picture a 3D update of the old arcade game called *Commando*, and you've got the idea. It's an interesting twist, but it creates problems that make it more trouble than it's really worth.

The main problem with the top-down perspective is the way it limits how far you can see in front of Slade. In the default view, Slade stands at the bottom of the screen, and you can see the equivalent of maybe 20 feet in front of him. Most weapons in the game have ranges greater than that, so it's very possible to be attacked by an enemy you can't see because he's standing just off the edge of the screen. The result is a strong sense of claustrophobia and a nagging, subconscious urge to crane your neck toward the monitor and try to peer up past the top edge of the display; it's impossible, of course, but you'll find yourself trying anyway. To make matters worse, entering a room or tunnel with a low "ceiling" makes the view zoom in closer on Slade, further limiting what you can see. At best, this perspective is hard to get used to; at worst, it actually makes the game harder than it should be.



You can look up and down to hit enemies on different levels, but the odd perspective makes aiming difficult.

A secondary problem with the default view lies in the way Slade's surroundings spin around him as you turn him from side to side; *Take No Prisoners* made me dizzier after prolonged play than any first-person shooter ever has. You can alleviate this problem by choosing an alternate view, which places Slade in the center of the screen and lets him turn to face any direction, rather than having the world turn around him. But, of course, this perspective takes Slade's already limited forward view and cuts it neatly in half.

Visually, *Take No Prisoners*' 3D environments are pretty impressive, but the game demands some major hardware horsepower. At 640x480, the game is quite choppy even on a Pentium 166 with 32MB of RAM. This problem disappears if you've got a good 3D accelerator, though; running on the same P166 with a 3Dfx-based Diamond Monster 3D card, the graphics were smooth as silk and very pretty.

Take away the unusual perspective, though — and you may well find yourself wishing you *could* take it away — and *Take No Prisoners* is essentially another in the long line of 3D shooters. It's a few hours of fun if you've got the hardware to run it smoothly, but it's nothing spectacular.

— *Dan Bennett*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Good sound and graphics (especially with a 3D card); nifty weapons.

LOWS: Steep hardware requirements; perspective makes it difficult.

BOTTOM LINE: This isn't a bad action game, but its experiment with a new perspective isn't very successful.

Dilbert's Desktop Games

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Cyclops Software

Publisher: DreamWorks, 640 N. Sepulveda
Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 234-7000

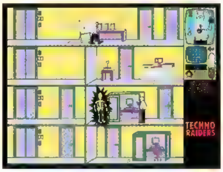
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; 486/66MHz; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 8MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space	Pentium 90 or higher

Scott Adams' hilarious comic strip comes to the PC, but this lazy cash-in will not do Dilbert's reputation any good at all.

Like millions of other desk jockeys, I don't know how I'd survive without my daily dose of Dilbert, Scott Adams' biting comic-strip satire of office cubicle life. It's one of the most relevant and consistently funny comics of the '90s, but in an ironic twist, Dilbert has become so successful that it's grown into exactly the kind of marketing-led corporate empire that the comics so brilliantly parody.

Capitalizing on Dilbert's popularity, Adams has licensed out his creation in just about every way possible — Dilbert calendars, mugs, T-shirts, books, jackets, umbrellas, hats, pens, watches... even floral arrangements! Nobody should criticize Adams for making the most of his deserved success, but he may want to keep a closer eye on what products he allows the Dilbert name to be associated with, or he'll find the brand losing credibility, and fast.

The best example of this potential danger is *Dilbert's Desktop Games*, an execrable interactive cash-in aimed directly at Dilbert's core audience — computer-using office workers. Preaching the Dilbert philosophy of "It's better than working," *Dilbert's Desktop Games* comprises nine little interactive diversions played directly from your Windows 95 desktop, along with a bonus screensaver. Unfortunately, none of the games are any good. Here's a rundown:



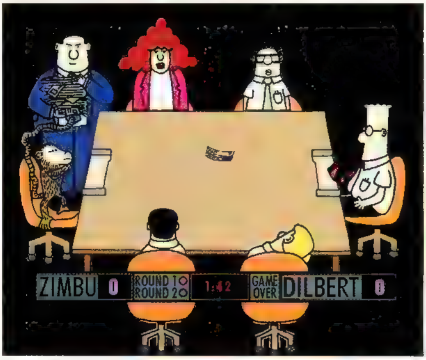
Dilbert aimlessly wanders the corridors of his nameless employer in Techno-Raiders.

Enduring Fools: This is a lame version of Wack-a-rat. Animated "induhviduals" pop in and out of the screen, and you zap them with Dogbert's stun gun. There's no way to win or lose, you just keep shooting until you get bored.

Project Pass-off: This is a lame version of air hockey. Dilbert sits around a meeting table with his clueless colleagues, and you must deflect work assignments towards Zimbu the monkey while snagging the perks for yourself. Minimal control and lack of variety kills this one off quick.

Boss Evaders. This is a lame version of *Space Invaders*. Dilbert runs across the screen while the bosses above try to drop "pink slips" on him. You can fire "status reports" back at them, hide under "in-box" shields and try to hit the occasional bonus "bungie-boss."

Can-O-Matic 2: This is a lame version of *Missile Command*, kinda. As evil HR director Catbert, you fire your employees into the air via a giant cannon, hoping they hit the randomly generation flying objects. Fun for about five minutes.



Shuffle work assignments towards Zimbu the monkey and grab perks for yourself in Project Pass-off.

Dogbert's CEO Simulator: Build up a company, hire employees and consultants, add new departments and, hopefully, watch profits rise. Unfortunately there's zero depth to this business sim, and not much fun either. You increase or decrease employee morale by taking pot-luck on a slot-machine type device. Enough said.

Techno-Raiders: The most elaborate game in the pack, but not much better than the rest. It's *Elevator Action* as you move Dilbert around the multi-levelled office, trying to avoid your co-workers, and zapping those who come near you. Power-ups add to the fun, but it's too slow and basic to entertain for long.

Elbonian Airlines: Launch company employees into the air via a giant slingshot and hope to hit the on-screen targets. Fun to start with, but it's too hard to guage and get right, and with no real objective, you just play until you quickly get bored.

The Final Word: Not actually a game, but a virtual rubber stamp that you can use to stamp 40 different "Dilbertisms" onto any of your open Windows documents.

The Jargonator: Again, not a game, but a Dilbert-style idea that doesn't work well here. You type plain English into the machine, and it turns it into overblown manager-speak. Unfortunately, it doesn't work as well as it sounds (the vocabulary is limited), and the idea gets tired fast.

And that's it. Of the ten "activities" included, none are fun for very long, and ten uninspired products bundled together just make one bigger uninspired product. *Dilbert's Desktop Games* fails miserably in its aim of giving put-upon cubicle-dwellers something fun and diverting to do with their computers other than work. Maybe office managers worried about employee productivity should consider having this installed on all their machines. They're more likely to want to get on with their work than play this nonsense.

— *Gary Whitta*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

24%

HIGHS: The screensaver isn't bad; remains true to the Dilbert spirit.

LOWS: The game's aren't any fun.

BOTTOM LINE: The free versions of *Solitaire* and *Minesweeper* on your PC's desktop are more entertaining diversions than this.

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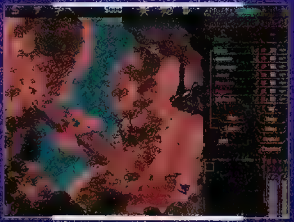

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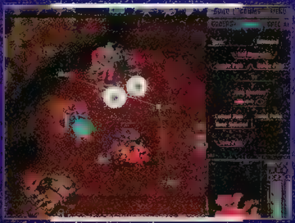

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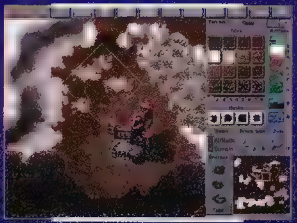

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Product Information Number 98

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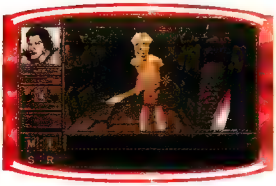

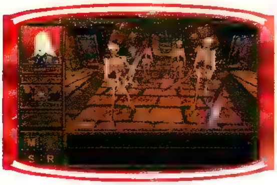

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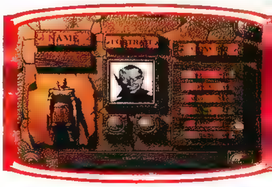

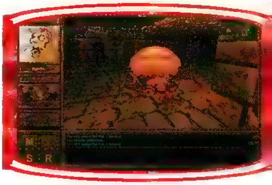

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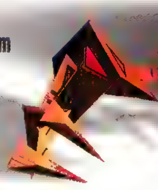

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Product Information Number 192

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Legends '98

Win95

Category: Sports simulation

Developer: Saffire Corporation

Publisher: Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., San Jose, CA 95129
(408) 246-0231

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 150; 16MB of RAM; Supported sound card; Gamepad

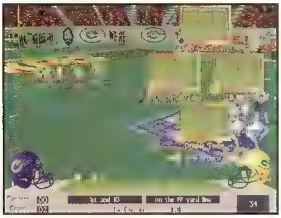
Accolade's latest attempt to sweep the computer football game market is long on glitz but short on blitz.

After sending its Unnecessary Roughness brand to the bench after several seasons of mediocre performance, Accolade's newest gridiron brawler — *Legends '98* — comes hard off the line with some attractive features, but this football game is outclassed and under-powered.

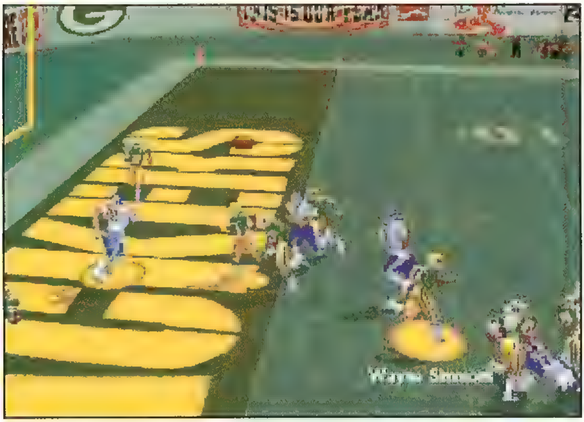
The main drawing point of *Legends '98* is its simulation of four different eras of football with the inclusion of all of the teams from the 1932, 1950, 1968, and 1997 seasons. But the history lesson doesn't end with just the teams — all of the rules and field markings of each era are included. As part of that new twist, players can also choose to pit any two teams from the four eras against one another in a game. Are the 1968 Dallas Cowboys better than the 1997 Packers? Players only need to make a few clicks with the mouse to set up that contest and find out. Along with individual games, players can set up fantasy seasons, mixing teams from any of the eras. Clearly, Accolade knows how to slap some chrome on a game.

Legends '98 includes many of the perks that have become standard on football sims including actual team rosters, dozens of statistical categories and a career option that lets players guide their squads through several seasons drafting and trading as necessary. Players can also take control as the offensive coordinator with the game's play designer that lets them craft whatever battle plan they can imagine. Maybe as the coach, you need to add the triple option to the Cowboys' arsenal or even the Statue of Liberty play.

When action does finally move to the field, top-notch graphics bring all of the bone-crunching, face-pounding, action home. Unfortunately for die-hard football fans looking for more than a casual arcade game, it will not be enough. A few plays through a season quickly reveal the fatal flaw of the game — the computer opponent. Not since the first incarnation of *John Madden Football* on the Sega Genesis has a computer opponent been so disappointing. It comes to shutting down the running game. If a player repeatedly runs sweeps to the right in the first half for long yardage, the computer opponent will continue to be unable to stop it even in the second half. About the only challenge to *Legends* is stopping the computer's offense, which can be deadly effective with the pass. More than once, my defensive secondary was flung back on its heels, as the computer quarterback was able to complete repeated bullets over the middle in double and triple coverage.



In *Legends*, cyber-coaches might as well keep their plays on the ground as rushers who bounce outside are almost always guaranteed a touchdown.



The Packers defenders try to scramble to halt a touchdown pass by the Patriots. These Packers don't look anything like Super Bowl Champions from last year.

Other gameplay problems hurt *Legends*, including computer-controlled linemen who spend little time actually blocking, the lack of a hurry-up offense, and the inclusion of an ill-conceived penalties feature.

For what it's worth, *Legends* is an enjoyable (if not believable) arcade game and not a serious football sim. For many that will be enough, but for those who like their football rough and realistic, *Legends '98* is facing fourth down and long.

— *Brett Jones*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

73%

HIGHS: Interesting slam. If you like to break the big plays, this will entertain you.

LOWS: Unforgivable gameplay errors including lack of a hurry-up offense and poor AI.

BOTTOM LINE: This is a game more for Nintendo than a PC. Not for those who want realism.

Virtua Fighter 2

Category: Arcade

Developer: Sega AM2

Publisher: Sega, P.O. Box 8097, Redwood City, CA 94063
(800) USA-SEGA

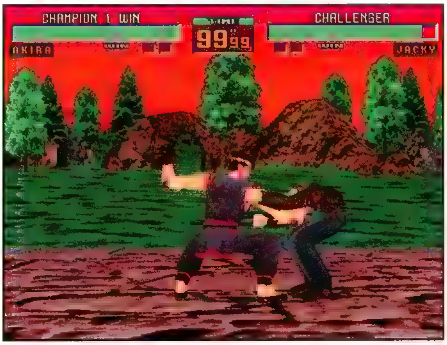
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	8-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; MMX; Supported sound card; gamepad

Sega's legendary brawler finally comes to the PC — but only hard-core fans with black-belt systems need apply.

In 1993, Sega sprung the original *Virtua Fighter* upon an arcade market accustomed to 2D, sprite-based *Street Fighter* clones, and though the original made its impact merely as a novelty (it was the first polygon-based fighting game), a year later, Sega's *Virtua Fighter 2* affirmed to the world that 3D was here to stay. Boasting sophisticated hardware and highly-detailed polygon models, *VF2* went straight for the jugular with flashy, texture-mapped graphics, unheard-of speed, and a refined play system that came close to perfection. Even today, *VF2* remains one of the most graphically impressive arcade games around.

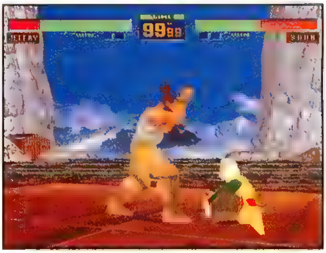
Just in case you've never made it into the arcades, *VF2* is a one-on-one tournament fighting game, which features a multi-cultural, equal-opportunity cast of polygonal martial artists with authentic fighting styles. The animation has been completely motion-captured, making every motion look lusciously fluid. That fluidity extends to the control — anyone who played the first *Virtua Fighter PC* will be able to jump right in and start playing with the simplistic three-button scheme. With just a punch, kick, and block key, you can bust out over 1,200 moves, from easily-executed punches and kicks to the ridiculously difficult "Stun Palm of Doom," a three-hit combo that requires a complex series of moves performed within fractions of a second.

In the transition over to the PC, *VF2* received a major overhaul in terms of presentation. The original eight characters have received makeovers in the form of flashier new duds and destructive new moves, while two new fighters have been added to the mix — Lion, a French teenager who practices Mantis Kung Fu, and Shun Di, a drunken Chinese senior citizen with a voice that sounds remotely like Beavis. While Lion is a bit underpowered, Shun is frighteningly unpredictable with his head-stands, drunken punches, and bottomless flasks of *sake*. Unfortunately, going up against the CPU fighters won't give you any problem — even on *hard* mode, *VF2*'s artificial intelligence (or lack of it) made winning the game after one or two runs through the championship mode a fairly pedestrian exercise (though the expert mode *is* a little more cunning). Your best bet would be to find someone else with *VF* experience, and go head-to-head via modem, network, or TCP/IP.



Akira, on the left, is one of the toughest characters to master — but if you have the patience to learn some of his crippling moves and reversals, you'll be unstoppable.

Hard-core fans will be glad to know that *VF2* contains some treats that weren't in the console versions. There's a portrait mode that displays a slideshow of the characters performing their daily tasks (including some revealing shots of the female characters lounging in bikinis and taking showers — hmmm). Replay mode contains pre-recorded matches of Japan's top *VF* players, along with a few bizarre matches that display the game's anomalies, or show the characters dancing to music.



Shun, the Drunken Master, has a handful of opponent-baffling moves. Once you take a seat by tapping down twice, you can leap back into a hand-stand or surprise your foe with a roundhouse kick.

But as good as it is, the biggest problems that face *VF2* are from its system requirements. The original arcade version flew along at 60 frames per second, while the PC version, running in 8-bit color on a Pentium 200, just cracks 30. Switch the game into high-color (16-bit) mode, and the frame rate goes through the floor.

Though there's an option to use the arcade's high detail 3D models instead of the lower polygon count optimized models, the resulting gameplay is much too slow to be any fun. In this mode, the arcade's lush 3D backgrounds have vanished, and are replaced by cardboard-cutout sets. And unfortunately, there's no 3D card support (though a 3Dfx patch may be on the way) to give the game an extra boost.

When you get right down to it, *VF2* is better-looking, better-playing, and packed with more goodies than any other PC fighting game. But without the proper hardware, the arcade experience may be totally lost — so consider yourself warned.

—*Colin Williamson*

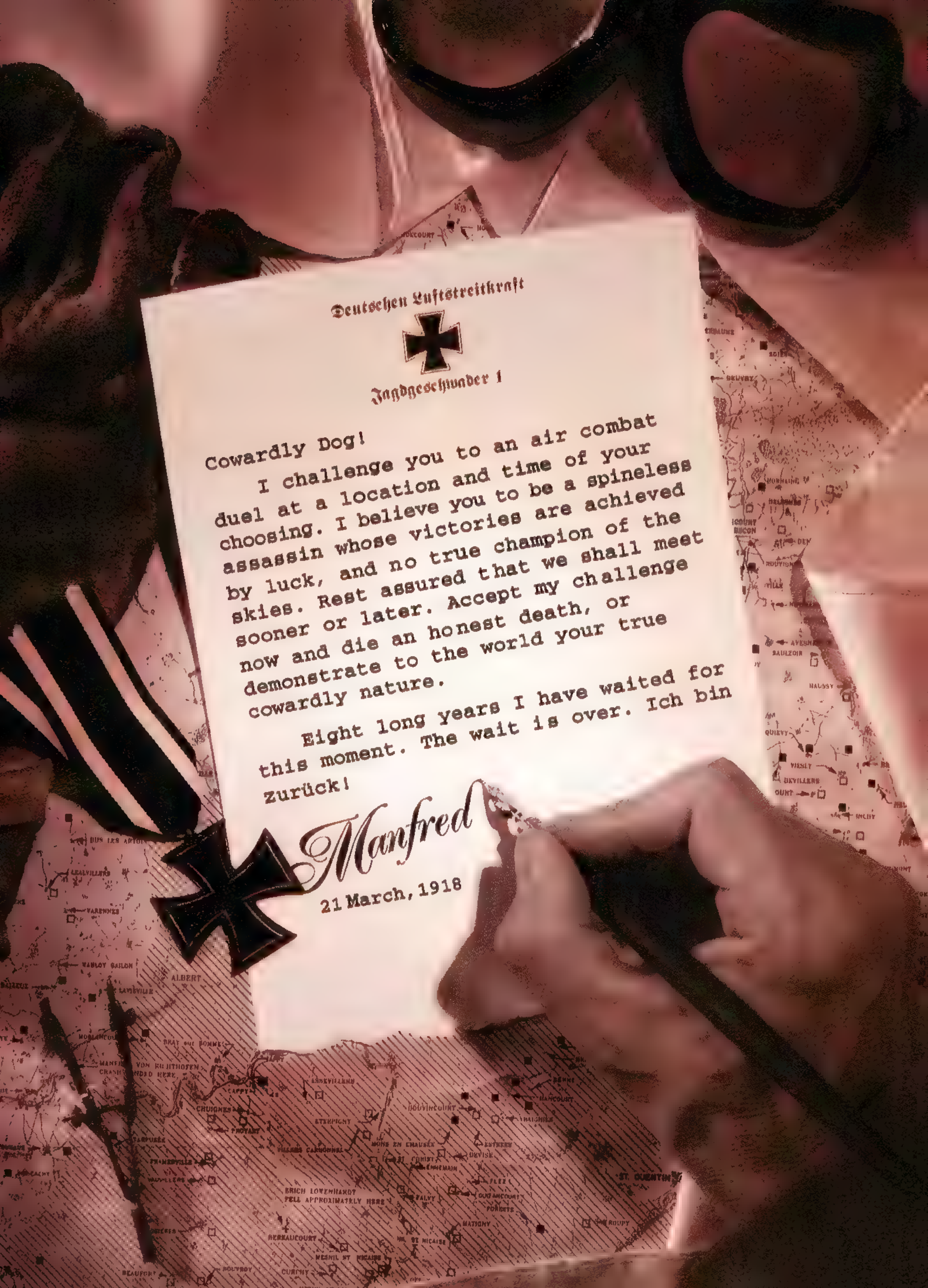
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Mind-buggling animation; good control; packed with goodies.

LOWS: Steep system requirements; no 3D card support; braindead AI.

BOTTOM LINE: *Virtua* fans with powerful systems will eat it up, but the rest of us should hold out for the promised 3D patch.



Deutschen Luftstreitkraft

Jagdgeschwader 1

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I challenge you to an air combat duel at a location and time of your choosing. I believe you to be a spineless assassin whose victories are achieved by luck, and no true champion of the skies. Rest assured that we shall meet sooner or later. Accept my challenge now and die an honest death, or demonstrate to the world your true cowardly nature.

Eight long years I have waited for this moment. The wait is over. Ich bin zurück!

Manfred

21 March, 1918

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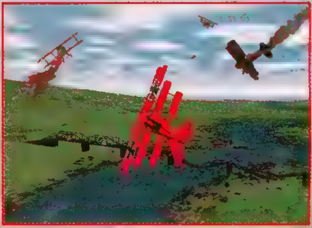

Dynamix's revolutionary new 3Space™2.0 engine leaps ahead of the competition with unmatched realism in terrain modelling, stunning graphics and the most advanced flight models ever brought to the home computer.

He's cunning, deadly, egotistical and totally ruthless–the most famous, and feared, fighter pilot that ever lived.
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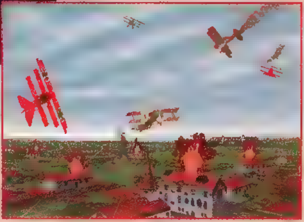
An epic achievement over three years in the making, Red Baron® II is the most richly detailed, all-encompassing flight sim ever to explode on the screen–and a true sequel to the legendary Red Baron®. From a multitude of gamer-directed features to stunning visual, audio and tactile effects driven by state-of-the-art technology, Red Baron® II will place you squarely in the flak-filled skies of World War I at the birth of aerial combat. It's in your face dogfighting and strategy at its best, a game so complete that it has no challenger... except you.

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

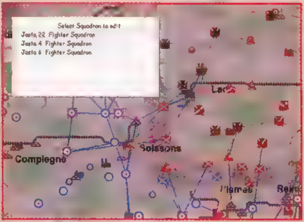
ack!

“...yet another classic.”



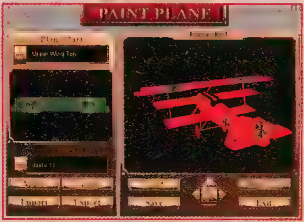
The skills, tactics and personalities of historical and non-historical pilots are recreated with unbelievable realism by Dynamix's new ACE AI™ system. As you attempt to take out a computer-driven opponent, your only complaint may be that the AI is too good!

“Red Baron® II will make thousands of Aces happy this winter.” — Hardcore Gamer


Select Squadron to edit
Jasta 22 Fighter Squadron
Jasta 4 Fighter Squadron
Jasta 6 Fighter Squadron

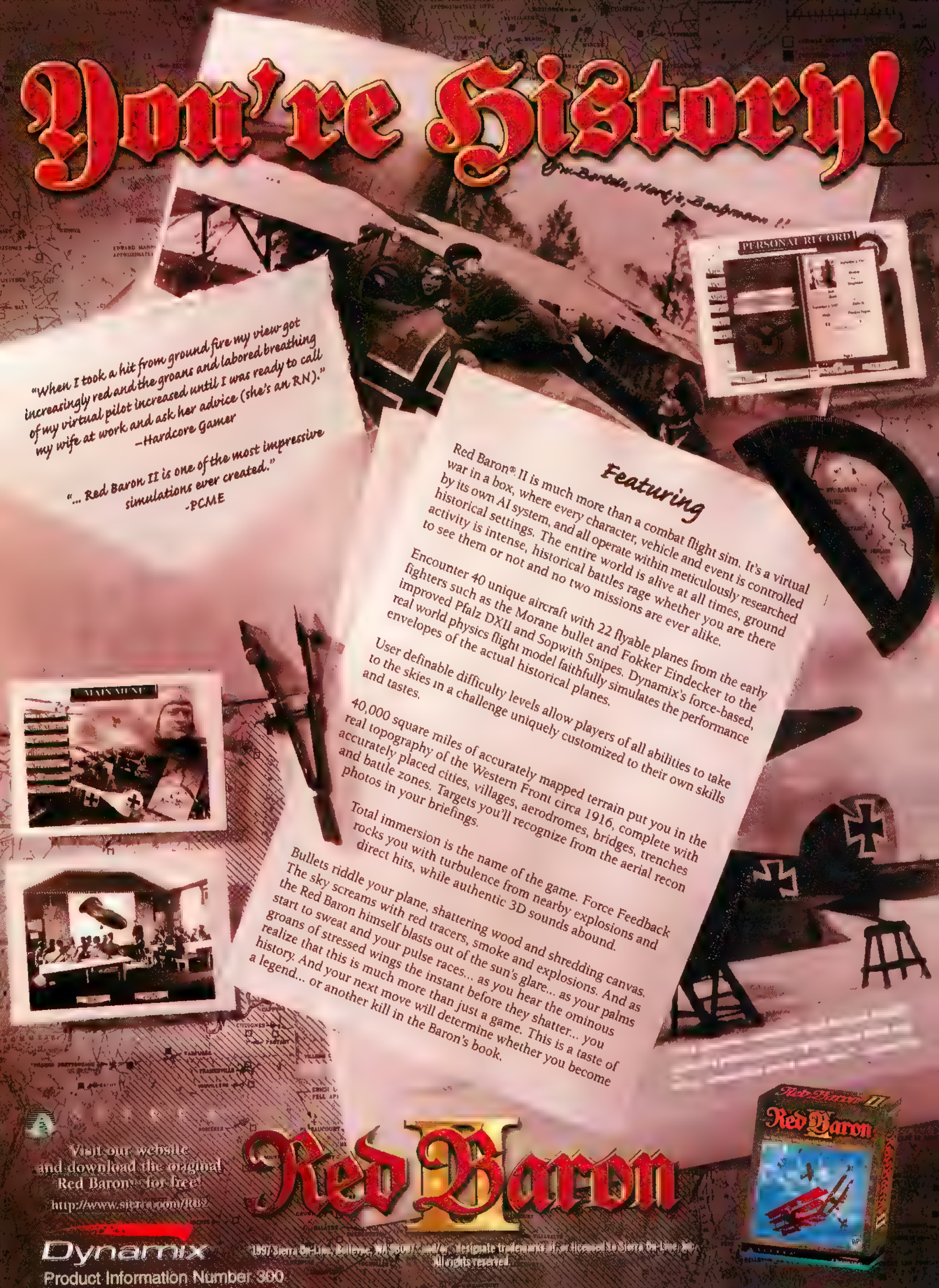
Edit existing missions or customize one of your own with the Dynamix Mission Builder™. From within historical settings, you control everything from objectives and flight plans to plane types and pilots, assuring a nearly limitless variety of missions.

“Open cockpit, pre-radar, crash-n-burn dogfighting at it's best - a simulation well worth the prolonged wait...” — Game Briefs



Customize the look, colors and insignias of your planes in the Plane Paintshop. Use provided patterns and palettes or import your own custom artwork from any standard paint program.

Red Baron II®



"When I took a hit from ground fire my view got increasingly red and the groans and labored breathing of my virtual pilot increased until I was ready to call my wife at work and ask her advice (she's an RN)."
—Hardcore Gamer

"... Red Baron II is one of the most impressive simulations ever created."
-PCME

Featuring

Red Baron® II is much more than a combat flight sim. It's a virtual war in a box, where every character, vehicle and event is controlled by its own AI system, and all operate within meticulously researched historical settings. The entire world is alive at all times, ground activity is intense, historical battles rage whether you are there to see them or not and no two missions are ever alike.

Encounter 40 unique aircraft with 22 flyable planes from the early fighters such as the Morane bullet and Fokker Eindecker to the improved Pfalz DXII and Sopwith Snipes. Dynamix's force-based, real world physics flight model faithfully simulates the performance envelopes of the actual historical planes.

User definable difficulty levels allow players of all abilities to take to the skies in a challenge uniquely customized to their own skills and tastes.

40,000 square miles of accurately mapped terrain put you in the real topography of the Western Front circa 1916, complete with accurately placed cities, villages, aerodromes, bridges, trenches and battle zones. Targets you'll recognize from the aerial recon photos in your briefings.

Total immersion is the name of the game. Force Feedback rocks you with turbulence from nearby explosions and direct hits, while authentic 3D sounds abound.

Bullets riddle your plane, shattering wood and shredding canvas. The sky screams with red tracers, smoke and explosions. And as the Red Baron himself blasts out of the sun's glare... as your palms start to sweat and your pulse races... as you hear the ominous groans of stressed wings the instant before they shatter... you realize that this is much more than just a game. This is a taste of history. And your next move will determine whether you become a legend... or another kill in the Baron's book.

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Red Baron II

Dynamix

Product Information Number 300

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Monday Night Football '98

Win95

Category: Sports

Developer: OT Sports

Publisher: OT Sports, 120 Lakefront Drive,
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
(410) 771-8550

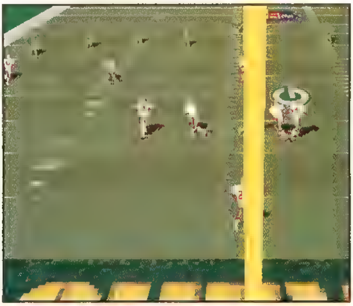
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; 2MB VRAM; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; Gamepad; Supported sound card

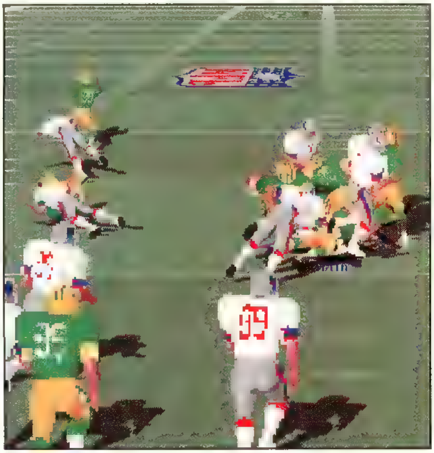
With a limited playbook and dicey controls, *Monday Night Football '98* is one Monday night party to avoid.

Monday Night Football has a place in the hearts of many a sports fan and has become a celebrated tradition that lives are planned around. However the computer game version of Al, Frank, and Dan isn't even something you would want to plan a half-hour around.

The crucial flaw in *Monday Night Football '98* is one that plagues many football games on the market. Instead of focusing on a simulation or an arcade approach, the developers opted for a hybrid of the two. The result in this case is a watered-down version of both that is likely to offend simulation nuts and bore arcade fans.

On paper, the game has all the right ingredients: NFL License, players license, play editor, stat-tracking, and season play. But somewhere in the mix something went awry. A key to any sim is a detailed and realistic playbook, but *Monday Night* sends you into battle with a tiny and generic set of plays. A simulation also needs to have the proper players performing the way they would in real life. Again, *Monday Night* comes up way short. One example of this is when the game has the Tampa Bay Buccaneers use hard-hitting linebacker Hardy Nickerson to return kickoffs, a laughable mistake that really shows a lack of care and/or knowledge of football. In a perfect world, a simulation should also have stunning graphics to display your coaching genius. While *Monday Night* is certainly a step up from Xs and Os it isn't up to par with the rest of the industry and doesn't really take advantage of the P100 it requires for play.


The sprite players look decent, but certainly aren't a graphical breakthrough.


This game is never quite sure whether it wants to be a simulation or an arcade game — and the result is that it's not good at being either.

As an arcade game, *Monday Night* can't even hold the jockstrap of current champ *Madden NFL 97*. The key to a good arcade football game is speed, graphics, and control. These also happen to be three areas *Monday Night* lacks the most. Whether using a gamepad, joystick, or keyboard the control of *Monday Night* is stiff and painful, taking away any pleasure involved with being in the middle of the action. It's obvious the developers were trying to make a sim first and an arcade game second; it's just unfortunate that neither came out very well.

Once you've retreated from the gameplay, there's little else but chrome to while away the hours. The TV studio interface from last year's game has returned and so have the same problems — it's simply a hassle to navigate through the menus. The Monday Night license is put to use with commentary from Al, Frank, and Dan, along with video of the famous trio talking about each team. Chris Berman is along for the half-time show, and though the video is decent quality, the full-motion video clips offer no real value.

Despite its flaws, *Monday Night* isn't the worst football game around. In fact, a few years ago this might have been considered one of the best, but the level of detail in games is rising, and *Monday Night Football '98* doesn't meet modern-day expectations. It's not a good enough sim to compete with the likes of *Front Page Sports,* and it's not a good enough arcade game to compete with *Madden.*

— *Mike Salmon*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

53%

HIGHS: The manual is a pretty good read, albeit mostly fiction.

LOWS: Tiny playbooks; poor graphics; and abysmal control.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a simulation without any of the qualities that make a simulation worthwhile; it's an arcade game that's hard to control.

Man of War

Category: Wargame

Developer: Strategy First/Simulations Canada

Publisher: Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch
Ave., Irvine, CA 92614
(888) 843-2661

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; DOS 6.0 or higher; 8MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

With a mix of grand strategy and first-person visuals, *Man of War* negotiates some of the trickier aspects of combat in the age of sail.

It's always interesting to see how different designers tackle the basic design criteria for a historically-based wargame. Hexes or no hexes? Turned-based or real-time? What scale, what graphic standards, what kind of interface truly fits with a simulation of conflict as it was actually waged during a given period?

With regard to late-18th/early-19th Century naval war, the question of scale becomes paramount: how can you put the gamer close to the action without losing a grip on the grand overview of what's happening? Equally challenging is the matter of pace as age-of-sail battles developed very slowly, with an almost ceremonial deliberation (except for the comparatively rare boarding action) and any attempt to depict the preliminary maneuvering — which sometimes went on for many hours — according to strict realism, would result in long periods of ennui.

In its debut game, Strategy First (working closely with Simulations Canada, a veteran company that's done a lot of consulting work for NATO, but which has never before made a serious effort to penetrate PC gaming on a mass-market scale), has come up with a fresh, innovative solution to these problems. Its concepts may not appeal to everyone who's interested in this era of naval warfare, but it certainly deserves credit for re-thinking the subject and grappling with its problems in an energetic and creative way.

Each battle, whether stand-alone or campaign, comprises of three distinct phases. First, you establish the "Doctrine" for your entire fleet or for each type of ship under your command (ranging from huge ships-of-the-line to dashing little schooners): At what range will they engage the enemy? What distance should they strive to maintain once the battle begins? Should they use reduced sails in combat (minimizing the chance of serious damage to the rigging and consequent loss of maneuverability and speed), or should they deploy full sail in order to gain that extra knot or two of maneuverability?

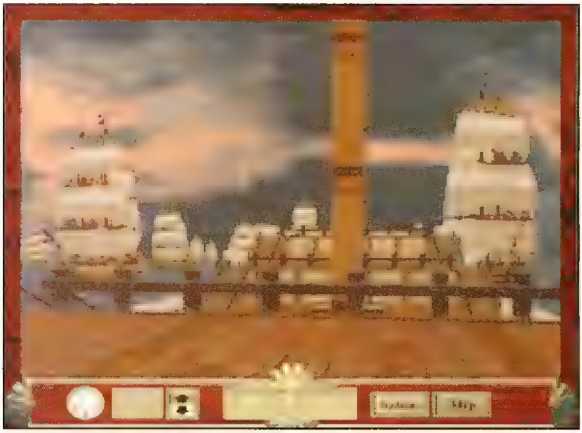
Once these basic parameters have been set, you segue to the tactical map, where you can issue orders to the entire fleet, each division within it, or, in some cases, individual ships. In this top-down view, you see the opposing fleets and their formations, the direction of the wind, and any land-masses or shoals you'll want to stay clear of. A quartet of icons lets you center on the flagship, issue orders to a single vessel, a whole division, or the entire fleet; clicking on them highlights the ship or ships that will be affected by the orders you're about to issue.

Orders are given as they were in the days before electricity: by means of signal flags. You may issue up to a dozen flag-commands per turn, and the captains or division commanders will attempt to follow them in the order they're hoisted. But don't expect lock-step compliance — as in real-life, your captains may not, through the smoke of battle, be able to see some of your signals, or they may have their own good reasons for disobeying (like repelling a boarding attack or suddenly losing a mast).

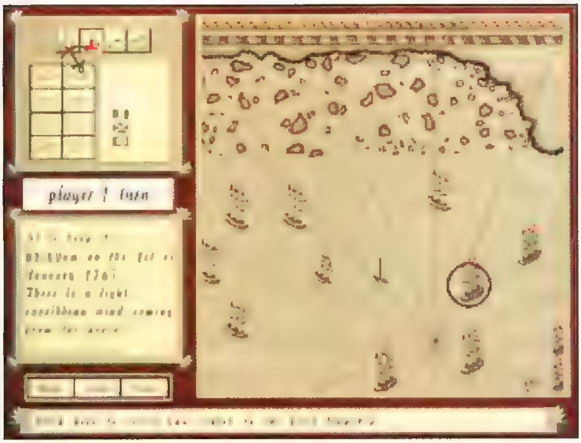
Once orders are given and the battle is joined you move into a four-minute period of first-person viewing from the quarter-deck of the flagship. From this perspective, you can move freely about the ship in any direction, using the arrow keys, and observe the actual battle unfold around you. A spyglass is only a click away when you want to check on another ship's identity or condition.

It's in this first-person mode that *Man of War* really shines. Being able to stride from port to starboard, fore-to-aft, and observe the real-time action is a treat, and the alternation between these four-minute 3D "movies" and the map-screen interludes allows you both to witness the battle and to ponder your next moves at leisure.

At its best moments, the first-person perspective offers an uncanny illusion of "being there": billowing sails in movement, broadsides crashing, masts shattering, your own ship shuddering as it takes a hit (you'll see the damage, in the form of splintered rails and holed decks, but it's rare to see the actual enemy hit — you have to be looking in exactly the right place at the right second), and unmasted, battered hulks



Once you've made your command decisions and have assigned directives to your armada, you'll be able to view your fleet's actions from the deck of your command ship.



From this simple and elegant menu screen, you can select individual ships or the entire fleet and issue your orders with ease.

drifting helplessly amid a forest of water-spouts.

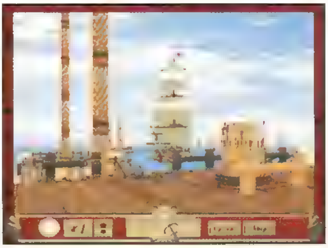
At other times, when there's no action in your immediate vicinity, the first-person segments are merely tedious — fortunately, you can accelerate time if you like and quickly pass to the next cycle.

All the classic fleet engagements are replicated (The Glorious First of June, Camperdown, Trafalgar, etc.), and Strategy First's design makes them more manageable and less muddled than they tend to become in Talonsoft's *Age of Sail*, but I enjoyed the campaign mode even more — it's a progression of engagements that challenge you to rise in the Royal Navy's ranks from a lowly lieutenant to the Nelsonian power of fleet-admiral. Each battle is well-designed to present different tactical challenges, including convoy escort, and includes variable weather conditions.

Likewise, the scenario editor is well designed and allows you to create all manner of bizarre engagements (30 schooners against one ship-of-the-line is fun, for example) with intuitive ease.

So far so good. But the game's reach exceeds its grasp in a number of ways that compel me to knock some points off its final score. I am quoted on the box, for instance, as saying "The graphics are phenomenal"; well, yes, when I saw them when I was writing a preview for this game, they did indeed appear so. In context and fully animated, alas, they're a mixed bag. Sea, sky, and weather effects are richly detailed, and ships in the middle-distance usually look realistic and give a nice illusion of the size, weight, and majesty of their real-life counterparts. Your own flagship, though, isn't so impressive: the pixels are coarse and chunky, texturing minimal, and the masts look like pasted-on cut-outs. Smoke from your own broadsides, and waterspouts from near-misses, are likewise much too pixelated to sustain the illusion of reality.

While it is entirely realistic for you to be unable to ascertain which orders a ship is acting on during the 3D phase, there really ought to be some way to keep track, on the map screen, of which ships have already received orders and which have not (like having the icons change color); in a big-scale battle like Trafalgar, it's very easy to lose track of which ships you've already given new orders to and which are still acting under the previous turn's orders



Though the graphics of the ships look great from a distance, there is a fair amount of pixilization on the command ship.

Sound effects, too, are a disappointment. What's there is good (creaking hulls, gulls, splintering wood...), but too often, in the first-person view, astonishingly long periods of time go by without an audible cannon-shot (even when you see broadsides being fired in the distance). In a fight the size of Trafalgar, with 50 ships pounding the bejeezus out of each other at close range, one should hear thunder, on a Wagnerian scale, almost continuously. It would add to the realism, too, if one could actually hear the guncrews below decks bellowing their drill, not to mention an occasional shriek from the wounded (on the order of "The blood! The blood!" in *Close Combat*).

Perhaps the most glaring weakness, however, lies in the game's failure to permit you to hoist the most common maneuver order of the period: "Form Line-Ahead." You can sometimes achieve something resembling this standard formation by signaling "Follow Me" or "Go With Bearing," but usually your ships stay bunched-up (until changing wind or damage forces them to alter course) so that some vessels mask the fire of others. The designers agree that this is a flaw and hope to correct it in the sequel. In the smaller battles, it's no big whoop; in the big ones, it can be annoying as hell.

There's also a rather amusing little glitch in the audio program: when a ship catches fire and sinks, you continue to hear the flames crackle until turn's end, even if the ship in question has been completely under water for three minutes. By the time you read this, there'll be a simple patch, but it really should have been caught before it was released.

Understand what *Man of War* is, then: it's a high-strategic level of simulation that throws in a real-time interlude more or less for aesthetic reasons. It is not a real-time tactical game and should not be judged as one. If you want to micro-manage each ship and count each hole in the sails, you'll probably be better off sticking to *Age of Sail* or Avalon-Hill's *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*.

Personally, I grew weary of the stand-alone battles after a while, but I'm still having "oceans" of fun with the campaign and the battle-editor. And at its best (a twilight engagement with the flash of broadsides rippling over the sails and a blood-red sky filled with thunderheads in the background), the first-person view packs a wallop.

Some games deserve respect as much for their aspirations as their achievement; *Man of War* may have its flaws and longueurs, but it commands respect for the originality of its concept. Whether you love it or hate it, you can't deny that it's refreshingly different and in this era of me-too game designs, that's no small compliment.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

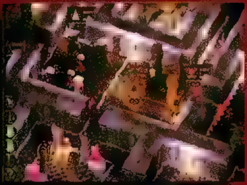
83%

HIGHS: First-person view is beguiling; good scenario editor, campaign.

LOWS: Inferior flagship graphics and vague command control.

BOTTOM LINE: A strong effort by a new company; its virtues far outweigh its flaws, and its good moments are very good indeed.

The word is out.



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– Computer Gaming World, ★★★★½

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– PC Gamer, 90%

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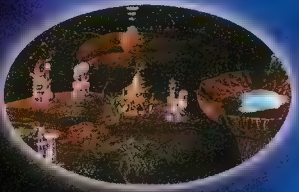

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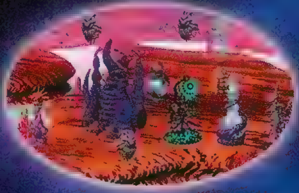

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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

THE LOGIC FACTOR

Dragon Lore II: The Heart of

Category: Adventure

Developer: Cryo

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman
Ave., Irvine, CA 92606
(800) 969-GAME

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; DOS 6.0 or higher; 16-bit graphics card	Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Subtitled dialog option

Cryo's latest adventure has a good plot, great visuals, stunning music... and a design that ruins the entire experience.

In the past few months, adventure gamers have had a lot to smile about. The genre is finally undergoing something of a renaissance with quality titles such as *The Space Bar, Zork: Grand Inquisitor,* and *Blade Runner* either currently on store shelves or getting ready for release. Unfortunately, not everything is coming up roses in the adventure game garden. Case in point: *Dragon Lore II: The Heart of the Dragon Man* — the sequel nobody wanted based on an adventure nobody remembers.

Dragon Lore II is the sequel to a bland and uninteresting adventure game that boasted a few tacked-on roleplaying elements and attractive graphics as its main selling points. The original was interesting mostly because of its few original ideas - nicely rendered 3D environments and a story line that (with its highly distinctive German/Eastern European flavor) was different than your run-of-the mill PC title. Beyond that, the game was hobbled by a poor user interface and frustrating arcade combat sequences. *Dragon Lore II* doesn't correct the sins of the original — and actually finds new ways to be frustrating for the player.

Werner Von Wallenrod, now a dragon knight, starts out on a new adventure.

DL II isn't completely without merit. The story line, at least, is interesting. As in the first game, you play the part of Werner Von Wallenrod, one of the Dragon Knights of Draconia. Each knight is allied with a specific warrior dragon that helps to protect the land from the ever-fiendish Orcs. Although you were proclaimed a Dragon Knight at the end of the first game, *DLII* begins with your status being challenged by an ambitious nobleman. Unfortunately, you can't truly claim your status as Dragon Knight until you've discovered your missing dragon, Maarach, and re-forged the bond between the dragon and your family.

The dialog for the game is fairly well written, and during conversations between the characters, manages to convey different personality quirks — the local princess is convincingly brooding and melancholy, and the resident wizard manages to speak in mysterious magical phrases that, for once, don't sound lifted from a *Dr. Strange* comic book. The voice-overs are somewhat over-done, though, and it only takes a few poor voice performances to shatter the illusion of being in another world, especially in an adventure game where so much information is conveyed through dialog. The soundtrack however, is exceptional, and contains some of the best music I have ever heard in an adventure game. In fact, it ranks up there with the incidental music in *MechWarrior II* and *Interstate '76.*

You must defend against the ambitious noblemen who want to strip you of your knighthood.

Still, a good plot and great music don't make a good game. The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, and the taste of *DLII* quickly sours due to a user-hostile interface, frustrating combat sequences, interminable walking scenes, and an instruction manual that's worse than useless.

Like the original *Dragon Lore,* you view the game from a first person perspective, and a point-and-click cursor allows you to cycle through moving, speaking, and talking icons to use items or talk to other characters. Two boxes below the main view window show items that are available in your left and right hands, along with buttons that can access your spells and additional inventory items. You also have life, strength, and magic levels that are measured in bars over the play screen. Yet in almost every instance, the simple acts of walking, talking, and using items are made nearly impossible by careless game design and thoughtless puzzles.

For example, I defy anyone to get through the first area, the swamp, without a walkthrough — even with a walkthrough, it's no piece of cake. The problem with the movement interface is that once you've clicked the cursor to move in a particular direction, you jump to an

the Dragon Man

elaborate walking sequence that quickly twists and turns to the new scene, making it nearly impossible to figure out where you are. Every time you move, you're forced to watch one of these canned sequences (you can't turn them off), and until you've seen them all and can recognize the subtle difference between them, you'll find yourself tracking over the same ground for a long time. Even doing something as simple as turning around in the Inn in the capital city can take up to five mouse clicks, and you're forced to watch a pre-rendered sequence with every click.

The puzzles are of easy to moderate difficulty, and usually consist of combining objects and using them in the proper places. Unfortunately, due to the lush, pre-rendered nature of the environment, even the simplest puzzles (and the objects required to solve them) are often impossible to find. For example, the official walkthrough tells you to find a branch in the forest in order to make a torch. The branch you need looks like absolutely every other branch in the forest. Luckily, I had a more detailed walkthrough telling me which screen the branch I needed was on, but it still took me a good five minutes of playing hunt-the-pixel before I was able to find it. Even worse, if the player misses an object, they may find themselves stuck at a much later point in the game, forcing them to restart.

The combat interface, though, is what really kills this game. Supposedly, Werner has three types of fighting blows under his control, but where you should move the real-time battle cursor in order to perform these blows is not explained in the clueless manual. In addition, your weapon and the video image of the enemy are so unresponsive to mouse clicks and give you so little visual feedback that it's impossible to know what's working and what isn't. The other action element, jousting, is much the same. The game gives no instruction on how to aim and balance your lance, and random experimentation doesn't provide enough feedback for you to improve your skills. If you could turn the action sequences off, this might be forgivable, but you can't, and during the game you're going to be attacked — a lot — at random. The two jousting sequences are central plot points that must be defeated to get to the end of the game. If you manage to finish those by doing random mouse movements, count your lucky stars and move on.

On the whole, *DLII* is an example of what we should be moving away from in adventure games. It contains some of the biggest and most common mistakes that adventure games make (hunt-the-pixel, *Myst*-like walking sequences, arbitrary and almost random death-and-restore sequences) wrapped in an interface that simply adds insult to injury. If one element could serve as an example of the kind of thoughtless design and bad decision-making that went into this product, it would be the button to quit the game. The exit button is a small-unlabelled icon in the upper left-hand corner of the screen that is easily mistaken for a decorative rivet. Clicking on it dumps you into the credit screen, no warning, no confirmation screen, no chance to save your game, no way to get back in, just **poof** — you're out!

On second thought, this might not be such a bad decision; a few minutes of playing *Dragon Lore II,* and anyone would want to get out fast.

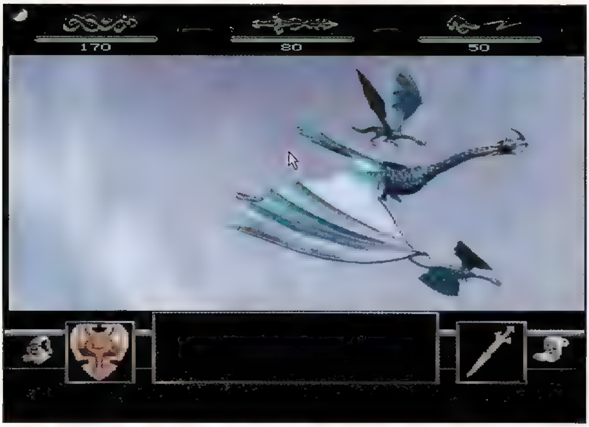
—*Keith Sullivan*

Character development in *Dragon Lore II* is nicely done, but the game is so difficult to play that the characters don't really matter.

A WALK in the clouds

One of the most frustrating parts of *Dragon Lore II — Heart of the Dragon Man* can be just getting started. The **Swamp/Forest** section is very difficult. The following lists what Werner needs to do and acquire to move on to the next section.

Take the gourd and rations found near the dragonet. (Upper right hand side of the screen near the dragonet's tail). Fill the gourd at the spring (listen for the sound of running water). Find a branch in the swamp (listen for a cracking sound when you enter the screen). Dip the branch into the pool of tar. Use the flint to light the branch in front of the tree. Click on the tree with the torch. The tree will teleport you to the edge of the forest.



The interface is one of the worst we've seen. And because your weapon barely responds to your mouse-clicking, it's impossible to tell what's working and what's not during combat.

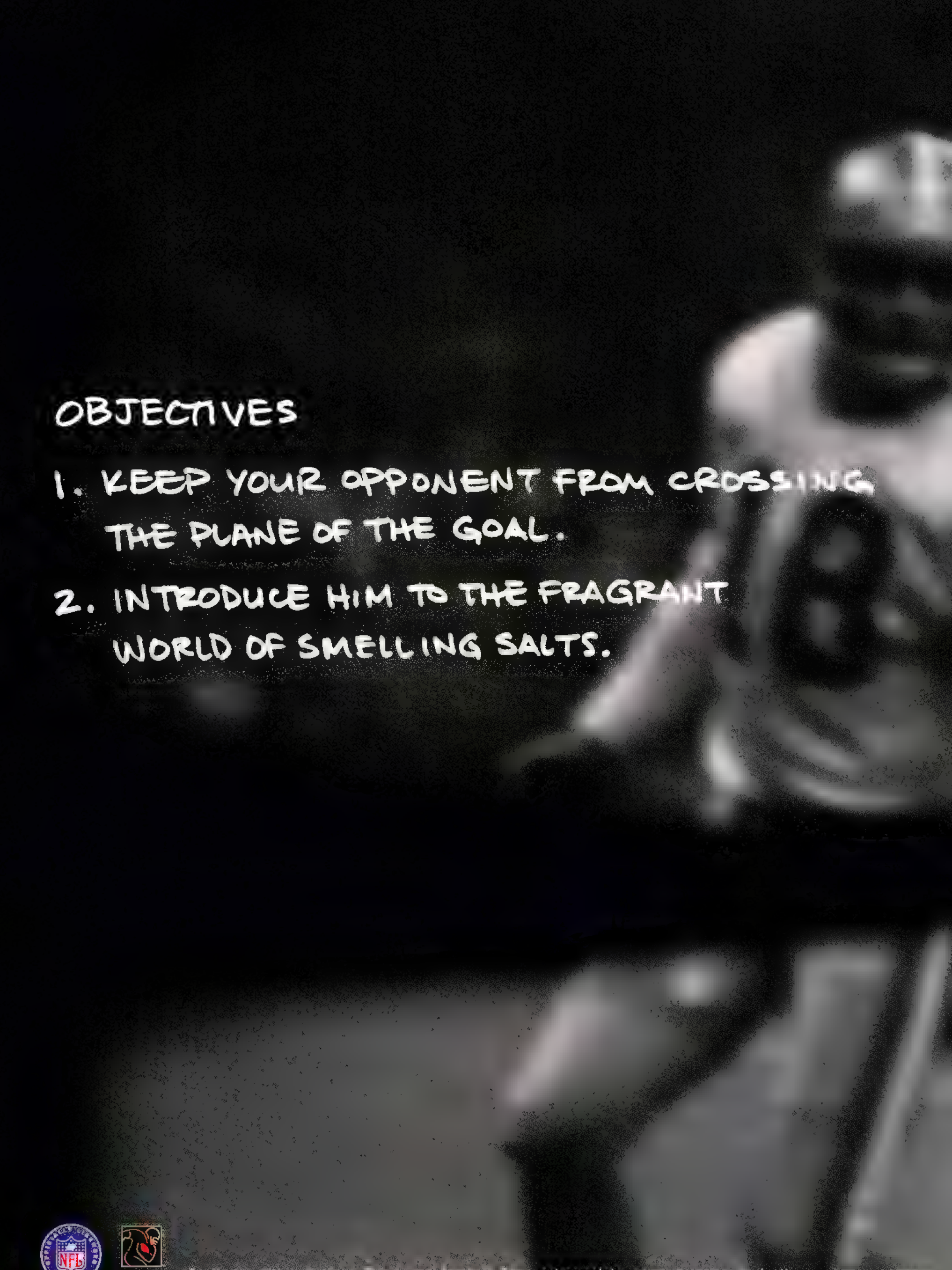
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

35%

HIGHS: **Good plot, characters, music, and visual effects.**

LOWS: **Interface from Hell; incomplete and confusing documentation; necessary objects are impossible to find.**

BOTTOM LINE: **Adventure games are enjoying a renaissance; but this shoddy effort isn't part of it.**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Claw

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Monolith

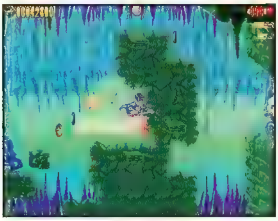
Publisher: Monolith, 10516 N.E. 37th Circle, Kirkland, WA 98033 (425) 739-1500

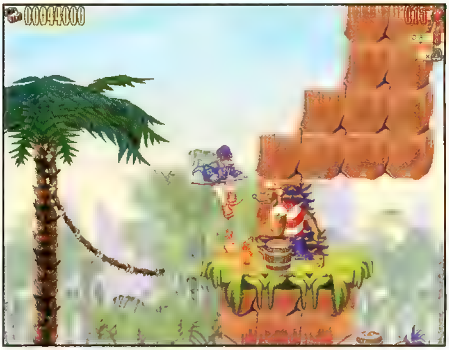
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM	Pentium 133; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Arrgh, landlubbers — get ready te' sail the seven side-scrolling seas as a frisky, furry Errol Feline.

With the exception of *Myst* clones, the most overworked genre in the gaming industry is probably the side-scroller. While the PC market isn't exactly flooded with them, we still get our fair share of the Super Nintendo and Sega ports that range from good to pointless. Good or bad, the *run-from-left-to-right* style of play has failed to find a significant foothold on PCs as gamers opt for more sophisticated fare like *Red Alert* or *Civilization II*. Nevertheless, side-scrollers seem to be with us for the long haul, as *Claw* attempts to rejuvenates the side-scroller for (hopefully) one last time.

Created and published by Monolith (the folks who brought you *Blood*) *Claw* features a swashbuckling story of high adventure on the Spanish main, starring Captain Claw, a, uh, cartoon cat with a sword. It seems Captain Claw has been captured by scurvy sea-*dogs* (groan), and has to fight his way to safety and save his men, while recovering treasures and collecting the pieces of a treasure map to discover the nine lives amulet. Power-ups like catnip mousies can make you invincible, and you'll pick up time-limited swords that can freeze your enemies or electrocute them.


Some of the platforms you'll hop on will dissolve after a few seconds — step lightly.


Captain Claw leaps into action, preparing to deal out some death with that big sword of his.

Aside from the freakish ability to walk on two legs and speak fluent English (in a voice mysteriously similar to Caleb's from *Blood*), your character has the ability to jump high into the air, send out magic blasts, and cap his enemies with a pistol. In short, you've played this game many, many times before. One novelty is the ability to pick up your enemies and heave 'em into other baddies (or onto spiked floors), but Claw moves so slowly when hoisting a bad guy that there's no time to maneuver. Also remotely amusing is "juggling" an enemy — as they pop up into the air after you "kill" them, you can slash at them repeatedly to make them holler while they're airborne

Levels are completely run-of-the-mill. There are lots and lots of jumping puzzles, where you must bound from floating platform to floating platform without missing a beat — otherwise, you have to start again (or die). In several instances throughout the game, dropping down into the screen in a leap of faith will plop you into a pool of tar, forcing you to start over.

At least it's pretty to look at. The graphics are presented in a high-res, hi-color graphics mode, and characters are big, colorful, and have loads of personality. The cel-animated cutscenes are right up there with Disney cartoons, and feature extremely fluid motion. Sound is an area in which Monolith excels, and *Claw* lives up to the high standards set by *Blood*.

The only real innovation *Claw* offers is network play. There's a hot-seat mode where players can see who gets the fastest time through a level, but the most interesting multi-player option is the 64-player network play over the Engage Games Network. 64 Claws bouncing around a level makes for some interesting play, to say the least — and user-created maps can be loaded in for some home-brew fun.

Claw would be a completely antiseptic game were it not for the bonus round, where you're awarded points based on how quickly you can skin and gut your fallen opponents with a rusty chainsaw. Oh wait, that's *Blood*. Actually, *Claw* is a 100 percent family-friendly game, with none of the excessive gore — or humor — we've come to expect from the talented folks at Monolith. This is fine, especially if you want to give little Johnny something to play with instead of fragging the hell out of someone in *Quake*. But you can't help but wish there were some kitty litter gags, or instances where Captain Claw hoists up his leg and starts grooming himself in the nether regions.

Then again, this may be Monolith's way of apologizing to parents for the gore-o-riffic *Blood*...

—*Colin Williamson*

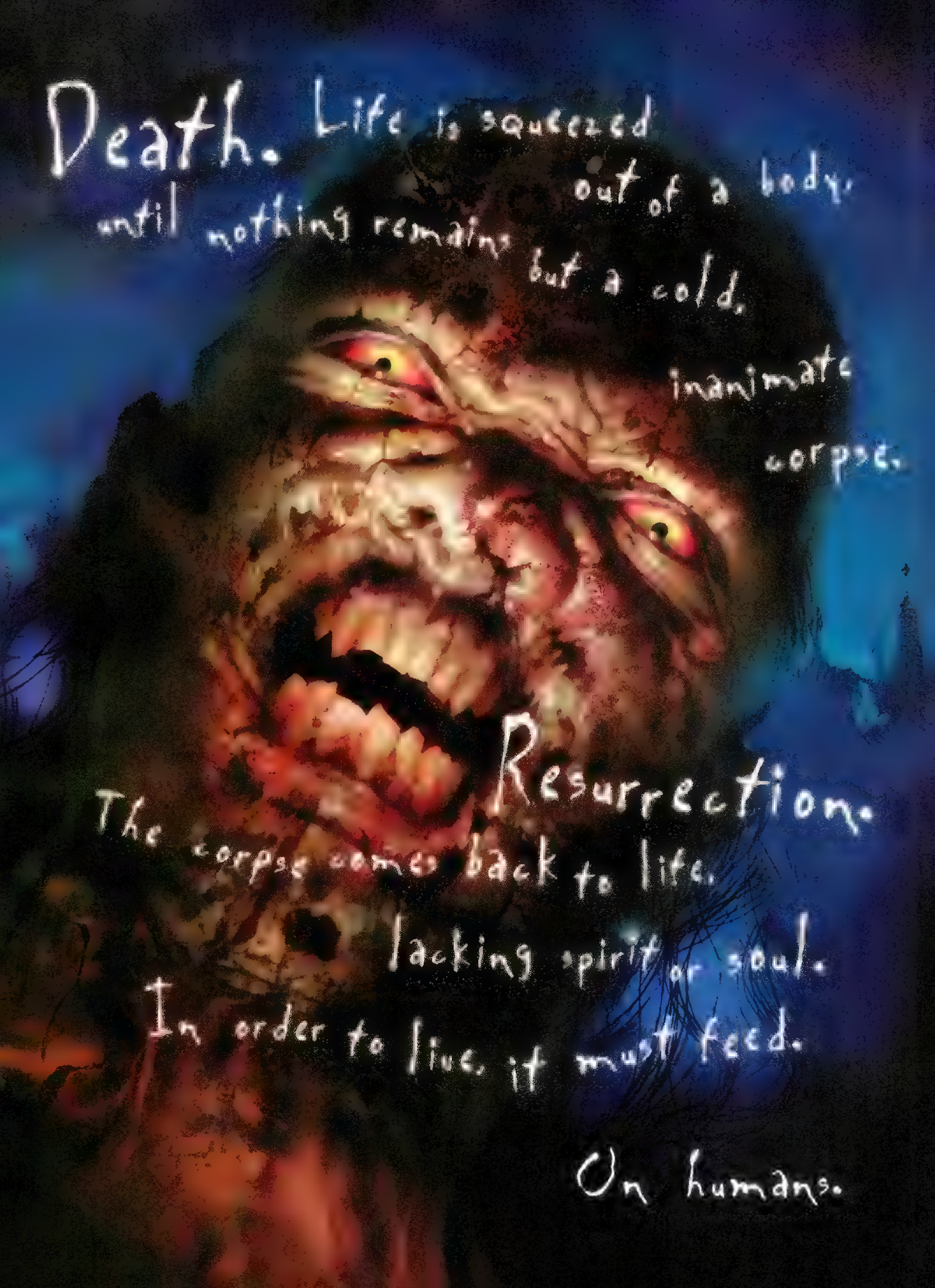
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Really nice animation; 64-player mode is interesting; relatively low gore factor means that the game is kid-safe.

LOWS: Boring. A rehash of a dead genre.

BOTTOM LINE: Buy *Claw* for the kids, but not for yourself.


Death. Life is squeezed out of a body,
until nothing remains but a cold,
inanimate corpse.
Resurrection.
The corpse comes back to life,
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COMING SOON.

Product Information Number 306.

Birthright: The Gorgon's Alli

Category: Strategy

Developer: Synergistic

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th Place
SE, Suite 300, Bellevue,
WA 98007 (206) 649-9800

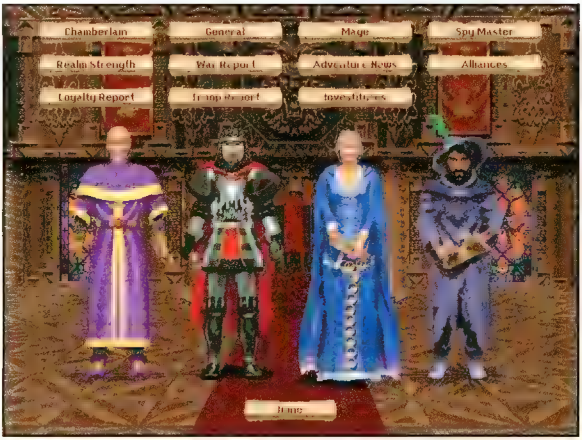
Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 8MB RAM; DOS; Mouse	Windows 95; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Birthright lets gamers try their hands at running a fantasy kingdom, but this ambitious game fails to live up to its promise.

There's a common fallacy shared by most people that the past was somehow "simpler." Politicians run for office on the premise that they can turn back the clock to an era when people were nicer, the streets were safer, and everyone lived together in peace and harmony. Fantasy movies, novels and even computer games feed this "return to Eden" wish by presenting a bi-polar world of pure goodness threatened by an "ultimate" evil. Destroy the evil and you return the world to a state of grace. The real world, of course, is more complicated than these simple black/white definitions.

Early Dungeons and Dragons games, based as they were on fantasy classic like Tolkien's "The Lord of The Rings," fell very much into this mold. The adventurers were good, the monsters were evil. Kill the beast, get the treasure, and everyone lives happily ever after. Except of course, that fantasy games were just that — a fantasy As gamers got older and the world got a bit more cynical, Dungeons and Dragons changed to reflect a more sophisticated attitude. What lies beyond the average RPG? What really goes on in your typical fantasy Kingdom?

Birthright, based on TSR's product of the same name, was designed to answer that question. It has an undeniably rich premise: the player starts out as a young, unschooled monarch in charge of a small fantasy kingdom. The country is one fragment of an old Empire that has broken up into hostile warring states. The object, of course, is to use a combination of guile, diplomacy, and military might to re-unite the Empire and ascend to the Iron Throne. Good and evil don't enter into the equation much as Elves ally with Goblins and Dwarvish kingdoms hire Troll mercenaries in the scramble for political power. The original paper and pencil game won the 1996 Origins award for best fantasy game, but gamers who are looking for the same kind of depth



Your high council will report on the current state of everything in your kingdom.

BIRTHRIGHT Adventures

Although you can complete the game without ever going on one of the adventures, die-hard gamers may still wish to do so. Although some of the artifacts are simply not worth the time and trouble it takes to recover them, a few can dramatically increase your powers in the strategic game. If you want to get to the items without going through the tedious dungeon crawl, you can get through any of the adventures in about 15 minutes. Simply do the following:

Use the priest spell "True Seeing"
Use the Wizard spell "Locate Object"
Use the Wizard spell "Teleport"

There will be some resistance near the relic, but you'll show up fully loaded without having to hack your way through 90 percent of the dungeon.

Here are a few of the relics that you should go after if you get the chance:

BARROW HILL: *Ring of Wizardry: The number of spells that can be memorized is doubled.*
BINDIER: *Banner of Roele: Human troops never rout on the Battlefield.*
BLACKSTONE: *Farid's Coffer: Increases money in treasury by 20 percent every three months.*
CAERLIEN: *Barazad's Tools: All holdings cost 25% less gold to build*
FALCON'S ROOST: *Crown of Command: Gain one extra Action per turn*
LOFTON: *Corgandal's Staff of Transport: Aids in shifting troops from one province to another.*
ROSE PALACE: *Danica's Crystal of Scrying: Reveals all hidden troops on the realm map.*
CASTLE ROURVEN: *Faele's Ring: Priests can cast 2 Realm spells every turn.*

ance

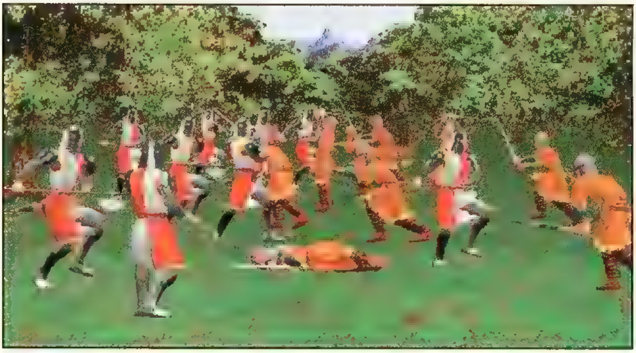
and enjoyment in this computer version are going to be very disappointed.

Birthright is broken up into three distinct parts, a full-blown strategy section, real-time tactical battles, and a somewhat peripheral and primitive role-playing game. The strategy game is by far the most complete and best implemented section. As ruler of your small country you have to earn "regency points" by forming relations with or subjugating your neighbors. This can be done in a variety of ways: mustering troops, playing different alliances against one another, peddling influence among powerful guilds, and hiring lieutenants to do some of your dirty work. Once you acquire enough regency points you can make a bid for the Iron Throne and face the final opponent — The Gorgon, ruler of a hostile alliance of nations bent on the goal of re-uniting the Empire under his control.

The strategy portion of the game is amazingly detailed; the full-blown "expert game" has over twenty potential actions that you can perform each turn. These include engaging in diplomacy, moving troops, declaring war, adjusting tax and production rates, and engaging in a variety of political maneuvers and "dirty tricks." Fortunately, the game has three levels, Beginner, Advanced, and Expert that layer on levels of complexity. Using these in conjunction with the extensive tutorials greatly reduce the game's learning curve.

Unfortunately the strategy portion is too detailed while missing certain vital elements. The map of the Empire is absolutely stuffed with symbols, icons, and troops. It can be enormously difficult to look at the map and figure out precisely what's going on. Do I own that castle? If I don't, does it belong to an ally? If I seize it will I tick off the country that's helping me fight a war over here? There are also at least 100 country and province names to learn, all of which are very alien and difficult to keep straight. Not knowing the difference between Roesone and Dhoesone can often mean the difference between a powerful alliance and a meaningless war.

Your party of adventurers is about to be attacked!



The "camera" that determines your point of view can be moved to any spot on the battlefield.

Kalilah strikes a Wyvern with her Sword of Lightning — the quarterback is toast!

On the other hand there's some information that's really needed that is just plain missing. It's difficult to get a handle on just where your money comes from every month and just how much is going to be available next month. Although it's very important to acquire land and expand your borders, political influence can also be gained by controlling "holdings" (buildings like castles and guilds) that can be anywhere on the map. Unfortunately the game doesn't give you a chart to tell you how many holdings you control or a way to filter the map so that you can just see your assets.

When confrontation occurs, play descends into a real-time battle. Players who only want to command at the strategic level can opt to have the computer command their forces, but this is a really good way to lose valuable troops. Troops are placed and commanded using a battle grid with animated troopers following your command in the upper half of the screen. Archers, Wizards, and Clerics can launch ranged attacks (which, in a nice touch, can kill any of your own troops caught in their area of effect). Damaged units can retreat and reserves can be brought up from a rear area. The animated battles are actually the best graphics in the game as the battlefield can be zoomed around and viewed from any angle. Although the battle graphics certainly aren't state-of-the-art, I can't deny a certain thrill watching my soldiers charge into combat in a fashion similar to *Braveheart.*

The weakest portion of the game is the role-playing adventure. This is played out as a first-person perspective dungeon crawl, with grainy graphics and two-dimensional sprites. You and three other characters hack your way through everything that moves, open up every secret door, pick up anything not nailed down and eventually find your goal. The adventures revolve around recovering some type of mystical artifact that can help you in the strategic game. For example, recovering Farid's Coffer increases the amount of money in your treasury by 20 percent every three months. However, given the time necessary to complete these missions, the uninspired sameness of each adventure and the fact that getting killed during an adventure will end the entire game, there is virtually no reason to ever go on one. The game can be completed just fine without ever recovering any of these artifacts.

All in all, *Birthright* is a disappointment on a number of levels. I *really* wanted to like this game and somewhere underneath its shortcomings you can see the richly textured experience that the designers were aiming for. Each section of the game — the ability to rule a kingdom, engage in political intrigues, run battles, and have a typical dungeon adventure which has repercussions in a larger realm — must have been irresistible to the designers. Unfortunately each part of *Birthright* — strategy, combat and role-playing — has been done separately and far better elsewhere. Putting them all together only serves to emphasize what each element is missing.

—*Keith Sullivan*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Detailed strategy module; different play modes.

LOWS: Unbalanced, incomplete play elements; poor adventure mode.

BOTTOM LINE: *Birthright* had all the earmarks of a classic strategy game, but its gameplay and design flaws bring it down.

68%

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Product Information Number 187

KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD ROM

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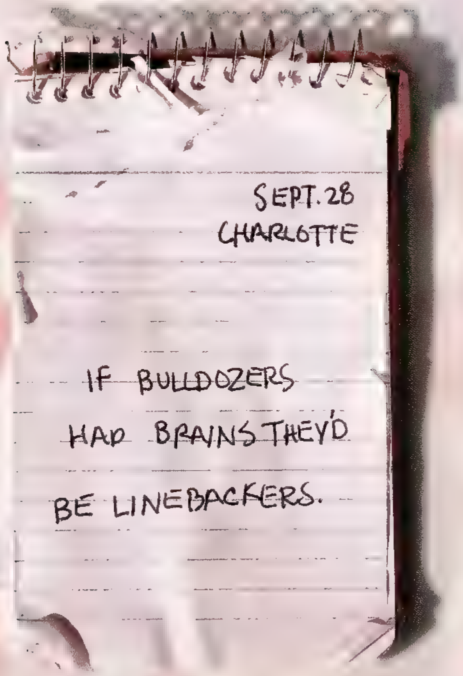
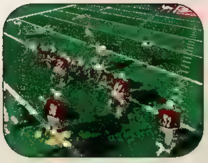
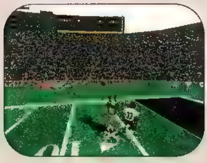

SEPT. 28
CHARLOTTE
IF BULLDOZERS HAD BRAINS THEY'D BE LINEBACKERS.





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Product Information Number 153

Age of Empires

Win95

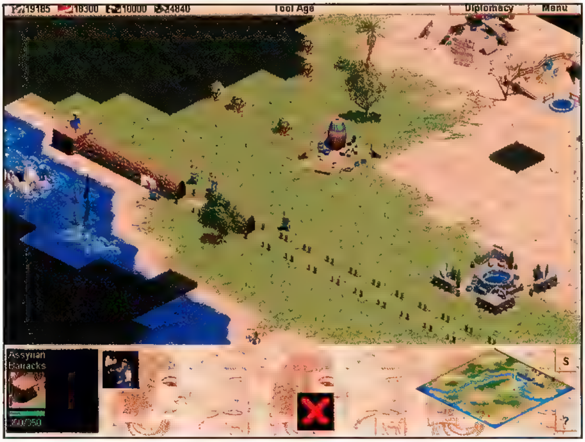
Category: Strategy

Developer: Ensemble Studios

Publisher: Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 637-9308

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Super VGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; 32MB RAM; Supported sound card

Mixing a pinch of *Civilization* with a dash of *WarCraft II*, this game delivers a sophisticated and addictive romp through the ages.



Thanks to an intuitive interface and fluid control you'll be able to build large walls and fortifications in one fell swoop.

Whether you're apathetic about the real-time strategy boom or think it's the greatest thing since sliced bread, you can be certain of one thing: it's not going to go away any time soon.

With more than a dozen real-time strategy titles due out by the end of the year and even more slated for 1998, most will try to mimic the familiar gameplay of *WarCraft II* or *Command & Conquer*, and only a very few will actually get it right. But if Microsoft's *Age of Empires* is any indication of what we can expect in the coming months, there may be a few diamonds hiding amid the inevitable lumps of coal.

Though there are a few niggling little problems, *Age of Empires* proves to be a skillful interpretation of all the things we've come to admire and expect in real-time strategy games. From the intuitive controls, sharp graphics, and multi-level research trees, *AoE* bears all of the tell-tale marks of a *WarCraft II* clone. But *Age of Empires* takes the loud clashing battles several steps further, thanks to the input of *Civilization* co-creator Bruce Shelly, and the result is one of the most sober and sophisticated strategy games to date. More importantly, it's an awful lot of fun.

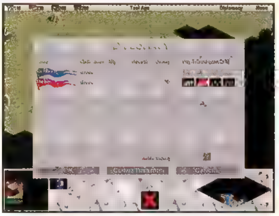
The random scenario generator gives players even more worlds to conquer, by offering almost infinite customizability.

Spanning the 10,000 years of cultural expansion and advancement that gave rise to powerful civilizations such as the Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians after the end of the ice age, the player is charged with leading one of twelve civilizations to greatness. But first you must forage for food in order to survive, and amass a fortune in stone, wood, and gold in order to become great military power.

Played from an isometric perspective that reveals lush, green valleys and stream-lined forests, getting started down the path to world domination is a breeze thanks to a sleek, smooth scrolling interface that mirrors the point-and-click simplicity of *WarCraft II* and *Command & Conquer*. It doesn't take long to figure out how to plunk down buildings, build units, and wage war on your rivals, but figuring out which units to build first, and which items to research can take some getting used to.

Just as building and resource requirements determined which units or structures you could build or upgrade in *WarCraft II*, technological advancements in *AoE* are dictated by the four ages of the period; the Stone Age, the Tool Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. Each new age offers significant advances over the previous age and in order to become eligible for to advance you'll need to task your civilians to collect the required resources, and erect certain buildings. For example, during the Stone Age, players need to collect food to generate new units and put up two buildings, but in the Tool Age you'll need to put up two buildings, and stockpile a large quantity of food and wood. This progression carries on throughout the ages adding resources like gold and stone and, in turn, you'll require more civilians to act as miners, fishermen, farmers, and foresters, which, of course, requires more food.

In most instances, there will be several ways to gather certain resources. For instance, gold can be obtained by mining or by trading surplus resources to nearby civilizations, and food can come from hunting parties, fishing boats, foraging villagers, or farms. Each method will yield different results, and it's up to you to determine which methods are the most effective for the development of your empire. This variety in resources makes *AoE* a much more believable and challenging game than the gold-hoarding simplicity of *WarCraft II*.



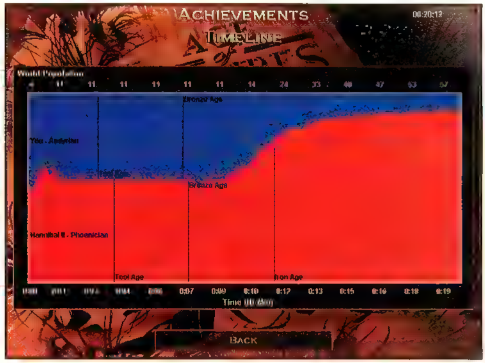
Once your culture has researched a market place you can offer tributes to your rivals to keep your borders safe.

As your empire grows, you can expand your capitol, secure vital resources with outposts throughout the map and construct fortifications (building large sections of walls is easy, simply drag the cursor where you want to build) to slow any pending attack.

While the units at your disposal are dependent on the advances you've made during a given age, at the top level (the Iron Age) you'll have access to a very lethal selection of units that range from siege engines, heavy calvary and archers, to catapult-equipped ships and war elephants. While most of the units are replicated for each culture, some are not, and under closer examination you'll find that even identical units from different civilizations may have different abilities. Each of the twelve cultures represented receive bonuses in certain abilities – much like the varied Allied and Soviet countries in *Red Alert*'s multi-player matches — some civilizations are more adept over water, others are better suited in hand-to-hand combat. But while the variety makes for more unpredictable play in multi-player games, these differences never seem to be explored or explained properly during the campaigns.

Regardless, when two powerful civilizations meet in battle, it is easily as intense as any real-time strategy game to date. The downfall is that the control needed to tame all those units is a bit lacking. Part of the problem is the spotty artificial intelligence, which can't seem to find its way around the map. There's nothing more frustrating than ordering a unit to move just a few pixels to the left, only to have it walk around a building, turn around and walk behind another building, before finally taking a leisurely stroll around a wooded glen to reach the designated spot. Then there are the occasions when units become "stuck" between structures or landscape features as they walk back and forth until you can extricate them (this regularly happens with closely placed farms.)

When combat units are involved, the results are even more annoying. As in *Command & Conquer* or *WarCraft II* your units can be "drawn out" by an enemy unit that passes too closely to their position, and they will blindly follow the enemy all the way around the map. You can issue orders to "stand ground", but if you're regularly reinforcing a large group of units with units as you build them, it's difficult if not impossible to make sure that you've ordered all of them to hold their ground. While this is no more annoying than it was in *WarCraft II* or *Command & Conquer* (or any other real-time strategy game this year), we're going to keep griping about it until somebody does it right.

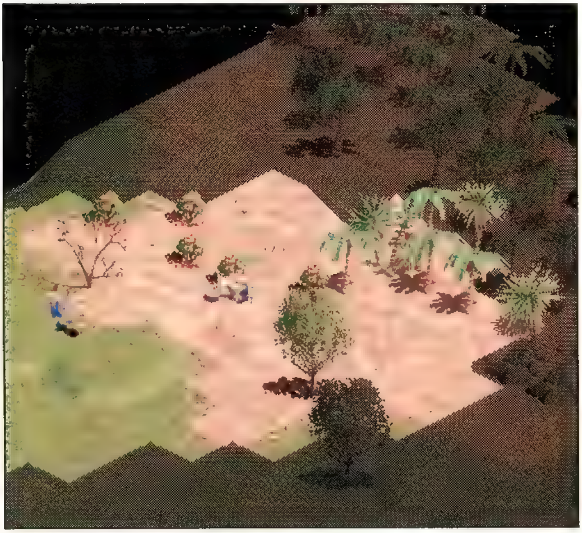


Following each battle you'll be able to see the deciding moments of your culture's success or failure — the player who advances first is almost always the winner.

Gripes aside, the combat in *Age of Empires* is extremely addictive and robust, and if you can manage to squeeze every ounce of fun out of the built-in campaigns, multi-player maps, and single scenario options, there's a very intuitive and user-friendly map editor/random map generator that can provide new worlds to conquer. The random map generator automatically creates the terrain according to your specifications, allowing you to hop right in and play without worrying about the campaign. If you're into do-it-yourself designing, the map editor gives you the control to place units, set resource limits and victory conditions, and even write your own scripts for key events.

In the end, *Age of Empires* is simply too good for most real-time fans to pass up. Yes, it follows the tried-and-true, build-and-destroy theme of games like *WarCraft II* and *Command & Conquer*. But unlike a lot of real-time hopefuls, *AofE* does this very well, and does it with a difference.

—Todd Vaughn



Until your culture advances to a higher level, you'll hunt for food and forage for berries

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Intuitive interface, attractive graphics, robust map editor.

LOWS: Annoying artificial intelligence, lots of micro-management.

BOTTOM LINE: It's very much a product of *WarCraft II* cloning, but *AofE* is a surprisingly sound and enjoyable real-time strategy game.

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

Win95

Category: Action/Adventure

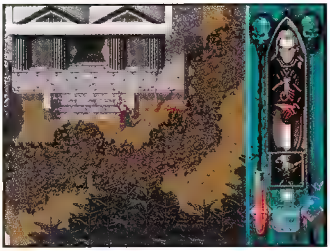
Developer: Silicon Knights

Publisher: Activision 11601 Wilshire Blvd.,
Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA
90025 (800) 477-3650

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 4x CD-ROM drive; P100; 16MB RAM; 12MB free HD space; VESA local bus or PCI video card with 1MB RAM; 16-bit color	P166; 195MB free HD space; Supported sound card; Gamepad

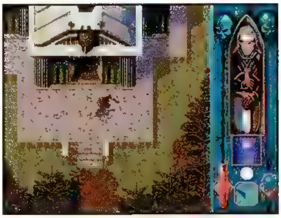
A console roleplaying game makes a good transition to the PC, but "console RPG" means action/adventure in PC-speak.

From the penny-dreadfuls to the current best-sellers, vampire tales have been a popular staple in the literary world with familiar neck-chompers such as Nosferatu, Dracula, Lestat, and my personal favorite, Count Chocula, bringing the world of the undead to life. But in the gaming business, vampire lore has gone virtually unnoticed, at least until now. Thanks to Activision's console-to-PC port of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, vampirism fans finally get their due. Though the box touts *Blood Omen* as an "epic roleplaying game," don't expect an experience similar to Ultima, Might and Magic, or even *Diablo*. *Blood Omen* was originally released on the PlayStation and uses the term "roleplaying" in the console way, meaning action/adventure to you and me.



Reach out and touch someone. Kain, like the phone company, is a long-distance bloodsucker.

As the game begins, we learn that the title character, Kain, was a young nobleman senselessly murdered during his travels, and is resurrected as one of the undead children of the night, sent on a bloodthirsty quest for revenge against his murderers. But during his travels, he learns that his assailants are hiding a much deeper secret that could free his soul from eternal bloodlust. The atmosphere of *Blood Omen* is dark and gory, and is not for the weak of heart. Excellent pre-rendered cutscenes and voice acting move the story along.



The rain on Kain mostly causes pain. Vampires hate water. Couple this with the fact they're dead, and you can imagine what they smell like.

Though it is firmly grounded as a kill-or-be killed action game, *Blood Omen*'s biggest assets are its sheer size and variety. Along the way, Kain will meet and beat 170 different creatures and bosses, and uncover a variety of weapons, armor, and spells. As a bonus, Kain can morph into different forms, each possessing different abilities. He can change into a wolf, bat, mist, and can disguise himself as a human in order to move among mortals undetected.

My complaints with *Blood Omen* are relatively minor — the graphics are intentionally dark, even though Kain can cast a light spell to make things brighter. Even lit, though, graphics can be fuzzy, and special items or traps can be hard to distinguish when not colored differently. The darkness helps set the mood, but I would think any self-respecting nosferatu should be able to see in the dark. Also on the topic of vampire lore, Kain doesn't seem to have any problem walking around in the sunshine. He's weaker in daylight, but lacks the shrieking chorus I've come to expect from a vampire in the sun.

Overall, *Blood Omen* has made a nice transition to the PC. It includes support for up to 10-button joysticks and gamepads as well as mouse support for menus, which is often lacking in console ports. However, the game's console origins reveal a few rough edges that can detract from the fun. First, is the artificial intelligence for the creatures you'll encounter. Many creatures simply move back and forth between two points, oblivious to their surroundings. While creatures become more difficult to defeat as the game progresses, they follow very predictable patterns, and once you've learned how to defeat one of any given type, you'll defeat them all with ease. My other major complaint is the oh-so annoying save feature, which doesn't allow you to save whenever you'd like — in a disappointing console holdover, you have to use pre-defined "save points."

These grievances aside, *Blood Omen* is an enjoyable experience that gives PC owners a chance to savor console-style roleplaying and an interesting story with little hassle. Even for those gamers with less gothic tastes, *Blood Omen* will at least be a different and enjoyable diversion.

—Hugh Falk

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Good playability; great story; lots of variety.

LOWS: Hard-to-distinguish graphics; monster AI is generally dumb.

BOTTOM LINE: An excellent console-style RPG and a definite change of pace from the current crop of action games.

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Shadows of the Empire

Win95

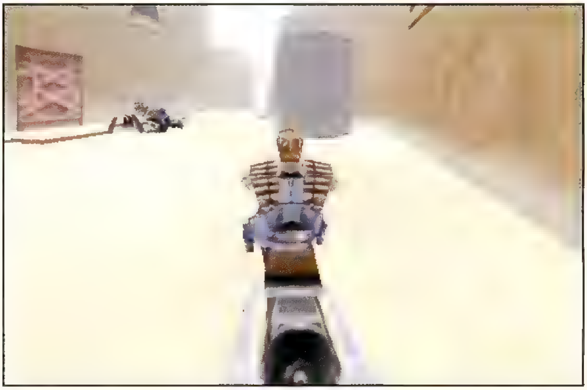
Category: Action

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael, CA 94192
(800) 782-7927

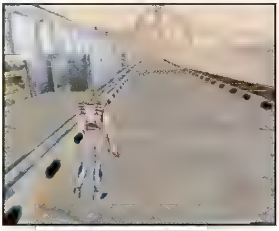
Required	We Recommend
Win95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90 (3Dfx accelerator)/Pentium 120 (all other supported accelerators); 16MB RAM	Pentium 133; 3Dfx or PowerVR2; gamepad

There's enough eye candy here to give you cavities — but there are only slight improvements over the B-grade Nintendo 64 version.



If you can master the control, you'll shoot through Mos Eisley faster than a rabid womp-rat.

When LucasArts revealed that it was working on a Nintendo 64 game, a 3D Star Wars-themed game named *Shadows of the Empire*, fans of the Force were ecstatic. What better game to show off a new super-console than an action-packed romp through a universe that we all know and adore? Despite its $79.99 price tag, the public sprang for it, took it home, cracked the shrinkwrap, and — you guessed it — were somewhat disappointed. Like LucasArts' Rebel Assault games, the console version of *Shadows* was a collection of mini-games wrapped in gorgeous graphics and cinematic cutscenes, and while some of these mini-games were brilliantly done, most were not. Nonetheless, an undaunted LucasArts set about porting it over to the PC as an accelerator-only game, running through Direct3D. Now, with a full year between the console and PC releases, and the big question on everyone's mind is whether LucasArts tweaked the gameplay to a more suitable standard — or is the game a straight, no-frills port?



The hover-train sequence in *Shadows* looks so cool. Too bad it's just jumping puzzle after jumping puzzle!

Unfortunately, it seems the enhancements to *Shadows* aren't enough to correct the basic problems of its mini-game design. Based on the book of the same name, *Shadows* spins off from the first *Star Wars* trilogy (the timeline falls between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*) and puts you in the shoes of Han Solo wanna-be Dash Rendar. Dash is another one of those scraggly, handsome rebel freeloaders, accompanied by one of the British-accented dorky droids that seem to infest the *Star Wars* universe. You'll destroy Imperial forces, pick off enemy fighters, and even attempt to take out Boba Fett in a mish-mash of gorgeous mini-games, some of which are superb, and some which never should have left the drawing board.

Shadows has an insanely great opening. You're tossed right into an attack on Imperial Walkers during the Empire's assault of the rebel base on Hoth, and the music, graphics, and vehicle animation merge to make you feel like you're *really in the movie*. You can launch the harpoon and trip the Walkers to the ground, while firing away at Imperial Droids and dodging friendly and enemy fire coming from 360 degrees around you. It's *great*.

Unfortunately, the Hoth sequence is over much too quickly, and the game moves on to more derivative modes of play — with a mediocre *Tomb Raider/Dark Forces* clone, a mediocre rail shooter, and a mediocre platform game. In each mini-game the design is extremely linear, and there's little room for branching or exploration.

The play's the thing, and most players will be bummed knowing that *Shadows* should have been *so* much better. Though one or two of the mini-games border on brilliance, the rest of them bring the whole experience way down, with fiddly control and repetitive gameplay. If you preferred the *Rebel Assault* games over *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter*, *SOTE*'s arcadey glitz is easily as entertaining (and mindless) as those titles — but if you're looking for freedom *and* great gameplay in the Star Wars universe, LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* is a far better choice.

—*Colin Williamson*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Some of the mini-games are really hot...

LOWS: ... but the rest of them are pretty tepid.

62%

BOTTOM LINE: *Shadows of the Empire* is a better game than the N64 version — but that's not much of a recommendation.

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MYTH
THE FALLEN LORDS

Product Information Number 104

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ON 4.0
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COMING SOON

Product Information Number 235

NHL 98

Win95

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category:	Sports
Developer:	Electronic Arts
Publisher:	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94401 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space	Pentium 166; 3Dfx Voodoo or Voodoo Rush accelerator; 45MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card; 28.8 Modem; Gamepad

Thanks to some much-needed additions, *NHL 98* is EA Sports' best hockey game to date.

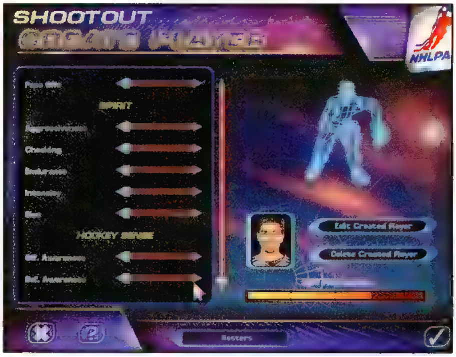
Over the past few years, EA Sports has treated us to some of the most visceral, action-packed sports games on the planet, ranging from the hard-hitting hardball action of *Triple Play* to the hoop-tastic antics of *NBA Live*. But as the leader in sports-induced adrenaline, EA's NHL series has always been able to deliver that extra little kick in the head that makes most other sports games seem as tepid as tap water.

Given the history of the series, it's not surprising that this season's incarnation features some of the best board-rattling action around; with a whole laundry list of improvements and new features, this year's model has become more sophisticated and attractive than ever by addressing some of the shortfalls from seasons past.

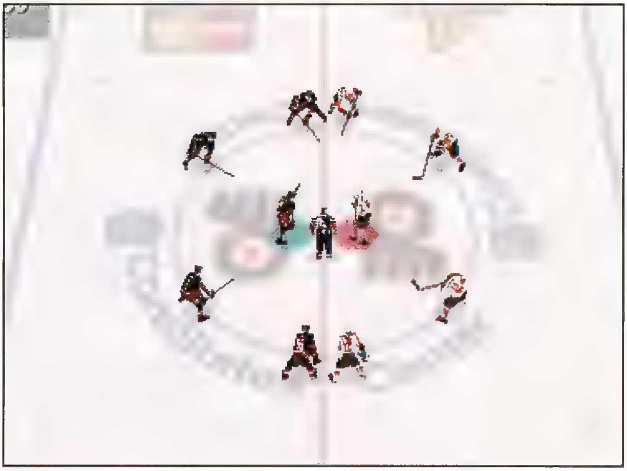
While some of these features have been a long time in coming (like four-button gamepad support) and others are just icing on the cake (3Dfx Voodoo support), there are enough new features to keep hockey fans hip-deep in gameplay at least until next season rolls around.

The Virtual Stadium technology of previous NHL games returns for another season of play, and though it may be getting a little long in the tooth, you'd never know it to look at it. Even though the 3D polygonal players and multiple camera views could've easily been carried over from last year without any changes, *NHL 98* features several improvements that make it better than ever.

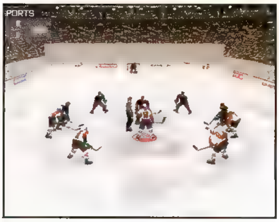
The tricky camera views of last year's version have been tuned to near perfection, with fluid transitions and spot-on perspectives that make previously unplayable views worth a second look (though the classic overhead view is still the best choice). The occasionally jerky motion-captured players of last year's game are smoother, turn better, and look more realistic than in previous



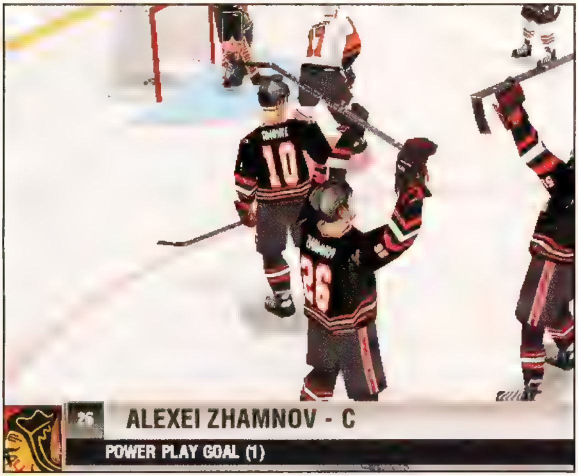
Hockey fans who've been upset over the lack of simulation features in *NHL* will find the coaching, league management, and player editor a welcome addition.



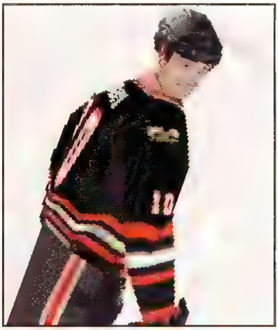
Thanks to a more intelligent camera system than previous *NHL* games, finding a good view for the action is easier than ever.



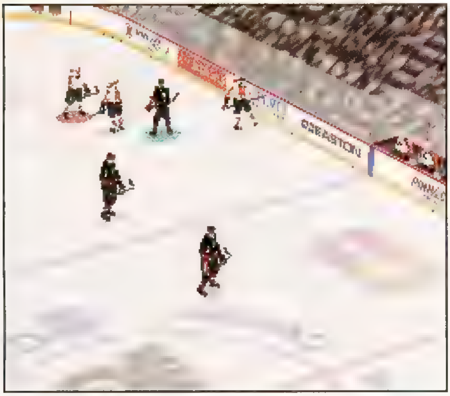
Sharp-eyed fans will be pleased to know that each NHL arena has been painstakingly recreated to match the real thing.



Thanks to the tougher artificial intelliugence of *NHL 98*, you'll have to work hard to enjoy post-goal celebrations like this. The mighty Blackhawks have scored again — in your face Philadelphia!



***NHL 98* improves on the graphic splendor of previous NHL games by providing 3Dfx support and smoother motion-captured animations.**



The artificial intelligence of *NHL 98*'s players has been vastly improved, so play on the higher levels can get quite difficult.

versions, thanks to improved animations for both players and goalies. And though it is probably the most gimmicky addition of them all, the designers have even gone to the trouble to texture-map faces of 500 actual players onto their polygon counterparts and designed each arena to look like the real thing. Heck, even the zamboni looks real.

The excellent play-by-play of announcer Jim Hughson returns in *NHL 98*, but this year he's joined by color commentator Daryl Reaugh, and the banter between the two is some of the best you'll hear in a sports game. Though the commentary has a tendency to get repetitive or lag a bit behind the action, when it works properly, it feels just like watching a game on television.

Out on the ice, the controls have been beefed up to allow for better control. Unlike previous NHL games where players were limited to two buttons, this year's model gets true four-button support, with separate button assignments for passing, shooting, speed burst, and a "NHL special," making those slap-shots, fakes, and teeth-rattling checks easier than ever.

While the action is still a bit too arcadey to be considered an all-encompassing hockey simulation, there are some subtle improvements to the artificial intelligence that make the on ice results of *NHL 98* more believable than in seasons past. On Rookie mode, the computer-controlled teams are no longer the pushovers they once were, and even the most inept team can mount effective offenses and coordinated defenses. On the higher levels of play, the challenge is cranked up several notches and teams can easily dominate your zone if your passing and checking game isn't up to snuff. Luckily, the AI for your teammates have improved as well, as they chase down loose pucks, check opposing players, and defend your goal with vigor.

While the in-game antics and graphics have undergone the expected seasonal improvements, this year some of the most significant additions to the series are to be found off the ice. One of the most requested features has been included among the usual exhibition, season, tournament, and championship games, as *NHL 98* ushers in a shoot-out mode that allows players to test their stick-handling and goal-tending skills against their favorite teams. And though the series has had an almost reckless emphasis on hands-on action in previous seasons, *NHL 98* makes an effort to address the concerns of simulation buffs by offering up new coaching and general manager options that will allow players to run the league without ever hitting the ice.

The management section allows players to hire free agents, trade players, or create new players for season or tournament play, and a new coaching feature (designed with input from Colorado Avalanche coach Marc Crawford) gives players the ability to plan defensive and offensive formations (along with the ability to set each line's aggressiveness ratings) before or during a game.

Though *NHL 98* will still take fire for some occasionally skewed results on the ice (i.e. high scoring games, too many shots on goal, and lots of generous penalty calls), the new features and upgreades represent a significant step forward from the action-only NHL games of yore.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

IGHS: Jaw-dropping graphics, fast gameplay, and a better AI make this the best NHL to date.

90%

OWS: The AI still needs work; experienced players can exploit game flaws with ease.

OTTOM LINE: A no-holds-barred sports action game with sim-style options, *NHL 98* is tops.

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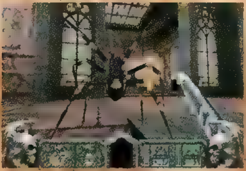

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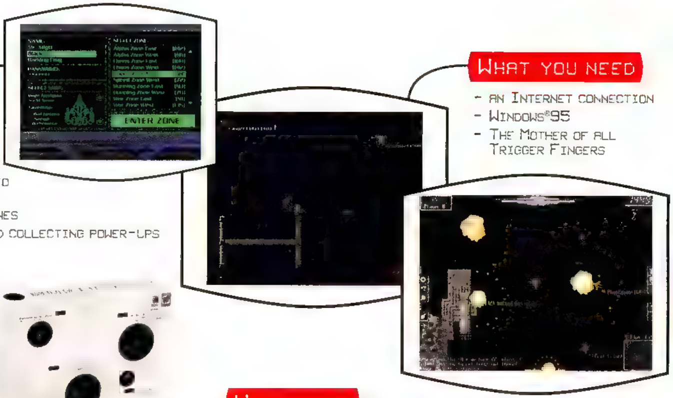

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Baseball Mogul

Win95

Category: Sports simulation

Developer: Infinite Monkey Systems Inc.

Publisher: Infinite Monkey Systems Inc.,
21 Burr Ave., Middletown,
CT 06457 (888) 226 6485

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB of RAM; Mouse

Enjoy complete control over your favorite major league team in this surprisingly good baseball management simulation.

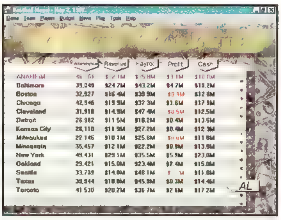
If you're tired of watching your favorite major league team botch yet another season at the plate, here's your chance to take the reigns and make all the decisions yourself. *Baseball Mogul* is a baseball franchise simulator that lets players take the helm of their favorite team as both the general manager and manager. No more shaking your fist at the television — this time the stupid business and coaching decisions are all yours.

Baseball Mogul starts in the spring of 1997 with each team sporting a 25-player roster with even more players waiting to move up from the minors. The game's speed can be adjusted to move ahead at various rates ranging from a single game at a time to an entire season.

As the months pass, players are firmly in control of their teams, determining everything from starting lineups to the price at the ticket counter. Such depth allows players to see the game from a whole new perspective — the profit margin.

Though the game is short on graphics and sound, *Baseball Mogul* keeps players involved by supplying them with a wealth of information about how their decisions are affecting their teams. The dizzying array of information includes scouting reports of players and teams and news stories that detail games and league events including player awards, retirements, and Hall of Fame inductions. There is also a financial page that lets players compare their club's financial bottom-line with that of other teams in both leagues.

From the beginning, players must chart a strategy for their team. Can the player's team afford to rest on its present roster's talents? Or is it time to rebuild with younger players? To make those decisions, players must first become familiar with their lineup. Here, each player is given a letter grade in various characteristics such as "speed" and "arm." With these ratings, players can shape the team in such areas as the batting order, positions, and the pitching rotation. Putting the best players on the field can mean bringing up players from the minors or benching a star player who is not producing. Still, settling on a lineup is just a small part of putting a winning club together.



	Attendance	Revenue	Payroll	Profit	Cash
ANAHEIM	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Baltimore	39,049	$24.7M	$43.2M	$4.7M	$19.2M
Boston	32,927	$16.4M	$39.9M	$0.5M	$12.8M
Chicago	42,946	$19.9M	$37.3M	$1.6M	$17.9M
Cleveland	31,918	$14.9M	$47.4M	$8.5M	$12.5M
Detroit	26,982	$11.5M	$18.2M	$0.4M	$13.5M
Kansas City	26,110	$11.9M	$27.2M	$0.4M	$12.3M
Milwaukee	22,146	$10.1M	$25.8M	[illegible]	$11.8M
Minnesota	36,457	$12.1M	$22.2M	$0.8M	$13.9M
New York	49,431	$29.1M	$35.5M	$5.9M	$23.0M
Oakland	29,421	$15.0M	$23.4M	$2.4M	$15.8M
Seattle	33,709	$14.8M	$48.1M	[illegible]	$11.8M
Texas	39,944	$18.8M	$45.9M	$0.3M	$14.4M
Toronto	41,530	$20.2M	$36.7M	$2.6M	$17.2M

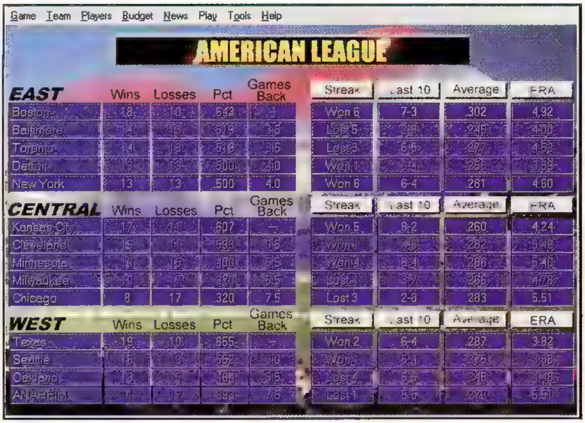
You can check your bottom line versus other teams around the country.

Unlike any other simulator on the market, *Baseball Mogul* knocks it out of the park when it comes to bringing home the pleasure and pain that has become free agency. Players are allowed to put together complex trades and sign multi-million dollar players, hammering out deals with computer-controlled agents and general managers.

A general manager in *Mogul* who jumps into the free-agent market to build their team can find their club bleeding red from the bottom line if care is not exercised. Some costs can be passed onto the fans through boosts in ticket and beer prices, but if those go too high, the club will lose even more money due to a lack of customers.

Baseball Mogul is a menu-driven business simulation that goes where other baseball games have never dared to go before. Its developers seem happy to let Electronic Arts supply the eye-candy games like *Triple Play 98* while they serve up the World Series of hardcore simulations for baseball fans.

—*Brett Jones*



EAST	Wins	Losses	Pct	Games Back	Streak	Last 10	Average	ERA
Boston	18	10	.643	—	Won 6	7-3	.302	4.92
Baltimore	14	13	.519	3.5	Lost 5	2-8	.245	4.00
Toronto	14	13	.519	3.5	Lost 3	5-5	.277	4.53
Detroit	13	13	.500	4.0	Won 1	[illegible]	.258	3.59
New York	13	13	.500	4.0	Won 6	6-4	.281	4.60

CENTRAL	Wins	Losses	Pct	Games Back	Streak	Last 10	Average	ERA
Kansas City	17	11	.607	—	Won 5	8-2	.260	4.24
Cleveland	16	11	.593	0.5	Won 1	4-6	.282	5.49
Minnesota	10	15	.400	5.5	Won 4	6-4	.286	5.40
Milwaukee	10	17	.370	6.5	Lost 4	3-7	.286	4.78
Chicago	8	17	.320	7.5	Lost 3	2-8	.283	5.51

WEST	Wins	Losses	Pct	Games Back	Streak	Last 10	Average	ERA
Texas	19	10	.655	—	Won 2	6-4	.287	3.82
Seattle	16	13	.552	3.0	Won 1	6-4	.275	3.88
Oakland	13	15	.464	5.5	Lost 4	5-5	.245	[illegible]
ANAHEIM	[illegible]	17	[illegible]	7.5	Lost 1	5-5	.274	5.51

All of the wheeling and dealing in the general manager's office will be for naught if your team is free-falling to the bottom of the division.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: A new perspective on baseball. Actual players depicted. A clean sharp design.

LOWS: Actual MLB team names not used. Very few bells and whistles. No hard-copy manual.

BOTTOM LINE: You'll learn more about running a baseball team than Marge Schott will ever know.

Rebel Moon Rising

Win95

Category:	Action
Developer:	Fenris Wolf
Publisher:	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (800) 434-2637

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium with MMX; 16MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space	Pentium 200 MMX; 32MB RAM; Supported sound card

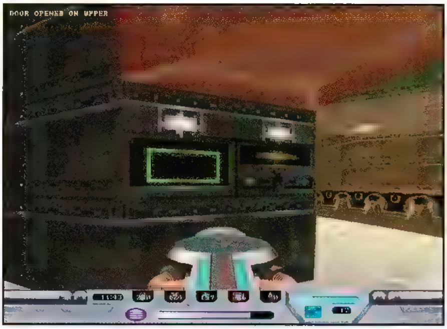
Sorry, but MMX support, voice recognition, and a few other twists just can't make a tedious game worthwhile.

When Intel announced its line of MMX processors earlier in the year, a handful of MMX-enabled games were announced that promised to show off the new chip's abilities with features like colored lighting, blistering framerates, and Dolby sound. Among these showcased titles was Fenris Wolf's *Rebel Moon Rising* — a first-person shooter that could have been an impressive game if it had come out right after *Doom*, but in the face of contemporary competition from *Quake*, *Hexen II*, and *Jedi Knight*, *Rebel Moon* is a curiosity and nothing more.

The problem with *Rebel Moon* is simply that it looks old and dated, despite the MMX enhancements. *Rebel Moon* has the same visual flatness of a game like *Doom*, lacking slopes, bridges, and levels-over-levels, and it hammers home how spoiled we've become by the sleek 3D engines powering today's hottest games. Even at 800x600, the textures in *Rebel Moon* are pixelated, and there are some perspective correction problems. The 3D world just doesn't have the solid look and feel of the rest of the current first-person shooters — especially the 3D enhanced versions. Your enemies are chunky sprites, and your ability to look up and down is as limited as it was in *Heretic*.

Rebel Moon does have its merits. The mission-based levels seem interesting — at least until you get past the briefings and actually start playing. To give credit where it's due, the missions are varied and intriguing and fit in with the background story: A futuristic version of the United Nations has becoming a corrupt ruling force and taken over moon colonies, and you, of course, play a freedom fighter determined to overthrow their rule. In a given mission, you may have to defend a target of the UN, sabotage enemy equipment, assassinate a leader, or escape from a stronghold. The problems lay in the level design and in the gameplay itself.

The maps are boring and don't vary too much from one mission to the next, and the effect is compounded by a limited number of wall textures. Far too many levels boil down to aggravating switch hunts once you've killed all the nearby enemies. On some levels, when you finally find a switch and activate it, you're given some cryptic message about exactly what it did, such as "stairs raised" or "passage on second level opened." There isn't much logic to the locations of the switches, and most of the time you're left to search the map to find the stairs or passages they control.


DOOR OPENED ON UPPER

Too much of the game involves searching the level to find switches like this one, and then figuring out what they do.

The arsenal of weapons you build up throughout the game consists of various ray guns, a rocket launcher and, of course, a railgun. They give way to the one area in which this game truly excels: the light sourcing effects of weapons' discharge is really cool. Reminiscent of *Descent*, the bolts, rockets, or rays light up the surrounding textures in brilliant colors. Firing the weapons also produces the only cool sound effects you'll hear in this game; the enemies' voices sound like they're coming through a broken speaker in a fast food restaurant's drive-thru, and the redbook-audio techno soundtrack, recorded by Kranium, gets annoyingly repetitive within a matter of minutes.

Before each mission, you're given a briefing of your goals to help the resistance defeat a futuristic version of the UN.

If you have a microphone, *Rebel Moon* boasts support for voice input through the use of IBM VoiceType software. The recognition is very reliable once you've "trained" the software to recognize your enunciation by reading phrases into the mic. It's used mostly for communicating in team-oriented multiplayer games, but you can also use speech in place of the keyboard for various commands such as changing weapons, adjusting the gamma correction, jumping, firing, and so on. There's a delay after you speak before your command is carried out, so don't plan to use it for well-timed jumps or with any accuracy.

The usual multi-player games — free-for-all, team play, and capture the flag — are included. Eight players are supported via an IPX network or the Internet, and one-on-one modem play is also offered.

With all of the features that went into *Rebel Moon Rising*, the bland and boring gameplay is a major letdown. The time for this game has come and gone; it just doesn't match up to today's shooters.

—*Joel Durham*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

54%

HIGHS: Interesting missions; cool lighting effects.

LOWS: Looks and feels very dated; boring level design makes play tedious.

BOTTOM LINE: All of its interesting features can't save *Rebel Moon Rising* from its lackluster and tedious gameplay.

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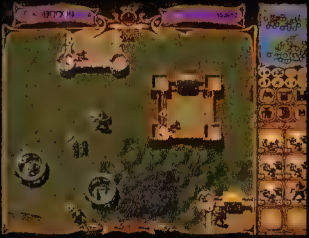

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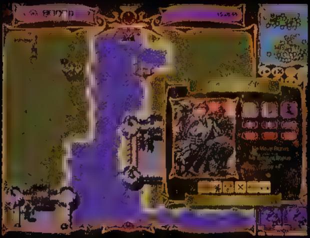

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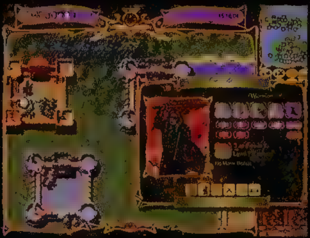

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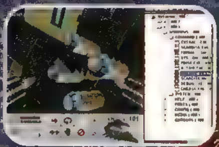


War, Inc.

Category: Strategy

Developer: Optik

Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722

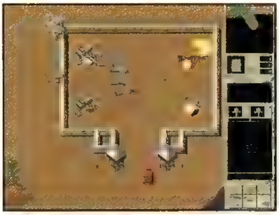
Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; DOS or Windows 95; 60MB free hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 150MB free hard-drive space

This may not be the most original game around, but it's one of the most complicated. It's also kind of fun... if you can figure it out.

There came a time during the recent E3 show — about midway through day two — when I thought that if I heard the words "This is a Real-Time Strategy Game" one more time I was going to start foaming at the mouth and beat that person to death with my briefcase. We must have seen about 150 such games at the show, and almost without exception, they were all as generic as spaghetti sauce — one recipe might have a bit more garlic, another a bit less basil, but it's always basically the same red slop you pour over pasta. Maybe ten percent of those games are going to turn a profit — the rest are going to sink without leaving a bubble in the tsunami of fourth-quarter releases. Rarely, if ever, has a genre exhausted itself so quickly.

War, Inc. has a chance to be among that ten percent. For one thing, it managed to jump onto store shelves shortly ahead of the other *Command & Conquer* wannabes, and for another, it really is a pretty good strategy game, even if, while you're playing it, you keep thinking: "Been there, done that."

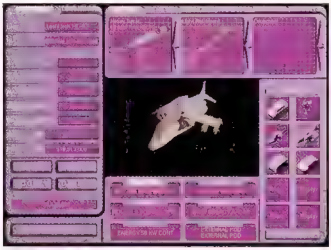
You take over as CEO of a giant mercenary corporation, your every move watched closely by the Board of Directors, who expect you not only to win missions, but also to make a hefty profit. There's a subprogram of financial investment, but unless you're really good at playing the market, I suggest you set that on automatic; otherwise, it's just a pain in the ass. There's enough micro-management to be done without also tending your portfolio. Anyhow, the computer does a good, cautious job of investing your liquid capital, and you get an interest rate of between eight and ten percent.



Too many of the fire-fights turn into arcade-style chaos, offering no room for real tactics.

Your soldiers are clones grown in vitro, and your vehicles are automatically built by factories. Your first job is to set up an HQ equipped with these facilities; you'll also need mines for raw materials, solar plants to generate power, repair shops, command centers, a hospital, and defensive works.

As you increase your earnings, you'll have to assign more and more scientists to research new technologies. As new weapons, hulls, power plants, and computers become available, you custom-design your own tanks, choppers, mechs, artillery, and so forth.



Custom-designing your weapons is fun and challenging.

I know, I know: you've heard this tune before. But there are literally millions of combinations of components, and it's really engrossing to design some of the more exotic and potent weapons and then test them in battle.

Once you've set up your base HQ, you form strike forces to attack and secure your objectives. Fortunately, there's a wide range of game-speed settings, from sedate to hysterical. Most of the battles are fun — good animation and lots of bang-bang — but the difficulty level escalates enormously after the third campaign. The AI churns out units so fast that assaults on enemy HQs often turn into twitch games in which reflexes count for more than real tactics.

On the down side, *War, Inc.* is not only a hard game to win, it's an incredibly complicated one with a learning curve you could ski down. The interface is baroque and some of its functions are mysterious.

A game this intricate needs a first-class manual and multiple tutorials. Unfortunately, it has neither. The tutorial is a muddle — what's written in the manual often contradicts what you see on the screen (you're told how to "activate" buildings that are already activated, for instance). The manual falls somewhere between inadequate and pitiful: the illustrations are too dark to interpret and the prose reads as though it were written by someone for whom English is a second language ("expeditiate" for "expedite" is a typical howler). And one of the hints is: "Remember, weapons need ammunition to fire." Well, duh!

Even worse: the process of segueing from the HQ screen into an actual campaign, while alluded to rather obliquely, is never actually explained — it took a call to I-Magic to elicit this rather basic information. (Go to the campaign map, select "Modify Forces," and then you can get down to business; this could have been clarified with one brief paragraph!).

Nevertheless, if you can muddle through, you'll probably become at least mildly addicted to *War, Inc.* Its elements are nicely balanced, and the campaigns offer a wide variety of settings and goals. Don't expect a push-over AI, either; this one is murderous and tends to ambush your strike forces or launch surprise raids.

In sum: there's nothing really new or different here, but the classic ingredients of the genre have been well mixed. It's still spaghetti sauce, but it's savory stuff.

— *William R. Trotter*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

67%

HIGHS: Challenging, well-balanced elements combined with lots of action.

LOWS: Some campaigns are too hard to win; disgraceful manual.

BOTTOM LINE: If you have the patience to figure it out, it's one of the better *C&C* clones currently available — but not the best.

Terracide

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: Simis

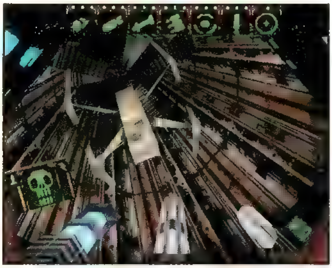
Publisher: Eidos Interactive, 651 Brannan St., 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 547-1200

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 150 (software only)/Pentium 90 (w/ hardware accelerator); 16MB RAM	Pentium 200; 3D accelerator card; 32MB RAM; Joystick

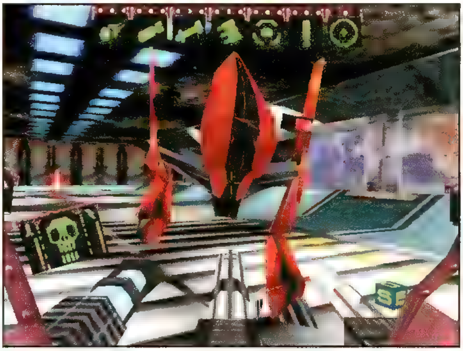
If you've got cutting-edge 3D hardware and a lot of patience, you may want to give this shooter a fling — then again, maybe not.

Just like a hi-fi salesman would use a Spice Girls CD to show off a set of woofers, many owners of 3D cards have been snapping up almost *anything* that shows off the power of their new toy. We can hardly blame them, since most 3D-accelerated games have been pretty good (mostly because they're enhanced versions of existing hits). But as 3D acceleration becomes *the* buzzword for the pending holiday blitz, flashy graphics and 3D acceleration simply won't make up for good gameplay. Case in point, Eidos Interactive's *Terracide* — one glance at the attractive screen shots and boastful claims of 3D-accelerated splendor inside the box would make any game-hungry graphics fan snatch it up, but unfortunately, this hype is rubbish, as is *Terracide* itself.

Terracide starts out with the obligatory FMV cutscene that reveals the plot: a race of genetically-engineered humans were granted independence from Earth, headed out of the solar system, and weren't heard from for years. Centuries later, they pop up in Earth orbit. Being the naive humans that we are, we send out a welcoming party, who are promptly gutted and made into Rib-B-Qs. Then we discover that the ex-humans are interested in wiping out the Earth with their powerful interplanetary armada.



Captain! Incoming TIE Interceptors! Well, maybe not. These little fellows take two or three blasts, then blow apart.



Look out, dude! He's gonna give you an anal probe!

Your mission is to fly *into* the enemy ships and blow 'em up from the inside — but instead of a Lando Calrissian-style romp through the guts of the Death Star, you get to pilot a slow, dweeby-looking craft through the most sterile spaceship interiors you've ever seen.

This is a *Descent* clone, and geeze, it's not even a good one. For starters, the controls are extremely difficult to set up and use whether you're using a joystick, keyboard, mouse, gamepad, or any combination thereof. Though you can define a seemingly infinite number of keystrokes on most devices, the controls lack the basic up, down, left, right, simplicity of *Descent* (which still required a fair amount of practice and fiddling to get right). For example, you could use nearly every button on a ten-button digital stick just for the different kinds of roll.

If you do manage to find a combination of controls that works for you, don't expect to be blown away by the gameplay because most of your time is spent blowing up computer panels and finding keys to open doors, and level design is painfully dull. Most of your enemies are abstract robots or rotating turrets, and look about as intimidating as the plastic mechanical dino-zords from the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

But what about the graphics? Though the whole shebang is powered by polygon-pushing 3D hardware, the end result is hardly something that qualifies as a "killer app." The designers probably thought they could get away with this by tossing in some pretty colored lighting, but the end result is akin to spray-painting your old sneakers in hopes of picking up women On the other hand, explosions and projectiles are impressive — robots shatter into transparent particles when destroyed, triggering a cool shockwave effect that travels outward. You can mark waypoints along your route, and flares allow you shed some light on gloomy situations.

But that's just about it. It's the old problem of style over content — only *Terracide* carries very little of either. The best way to deal with a game like this is to vote with your dollars; if you let *Terracide* stay on the shelf, publishers may finally get the idea that 3D card owners aren't a bunch of simpletons who base their purchases on transparency effects and pimped-out disco lighting. Let's hope they get the picture — in plain black and white.

— *Colin Williamson*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

27%

HIGHS: Nice explosions and colored lighting effects, cool box.

LOWS: Difficult controls; zero fun; boring level designs.

BOTTOM LINE: If you absolutely *must* have colored lighting and transparent effects, go buy a lava lamp.

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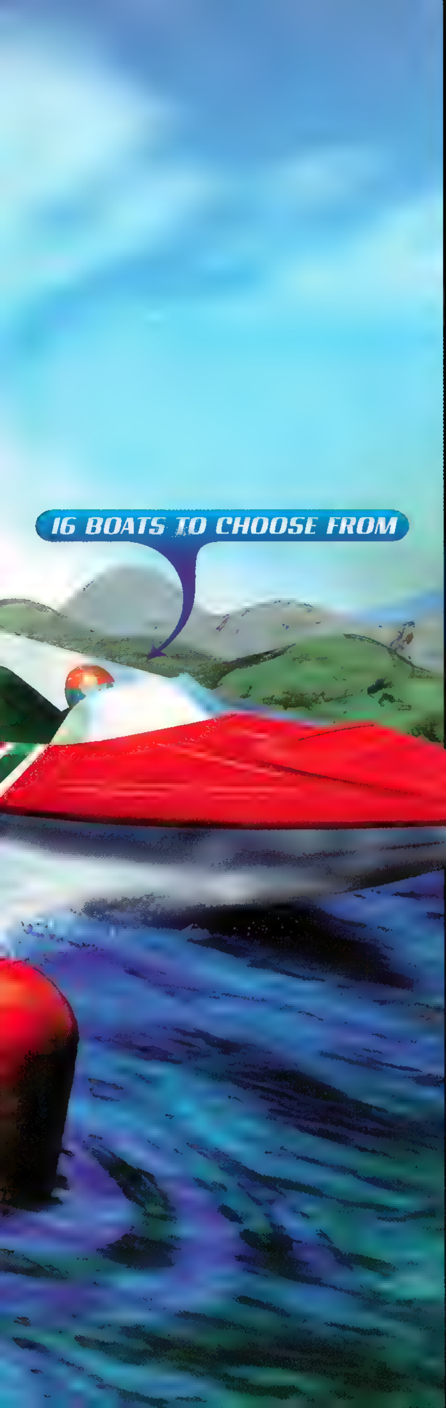

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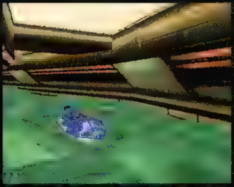
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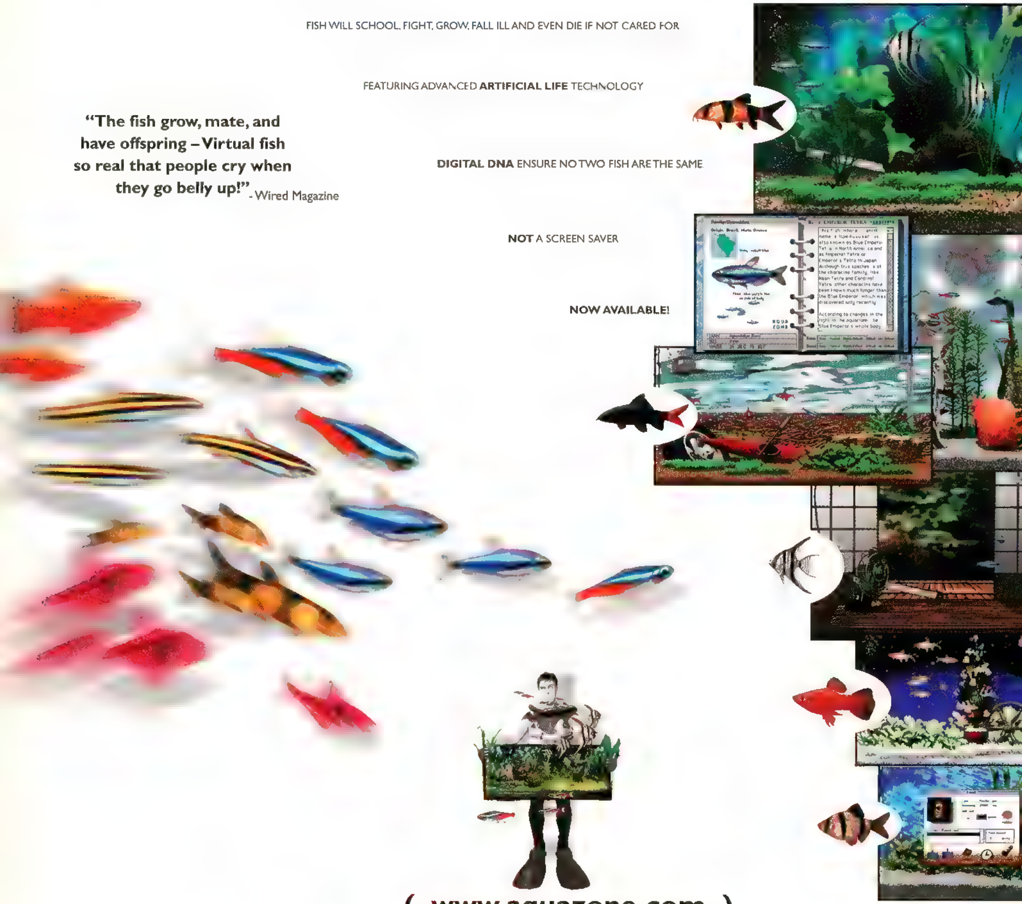
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Product Information Number 277

World Wide Soccer

Win95

Category: Sports

Developer: Sega

Publisher: Sega, P.O. Box 8097,
Redwood City, CA 94063
(800) 872-7342

Sega's soccer effort is fun to play, but some technical shortcomings make it an inferior spin-off of the Saturn original.

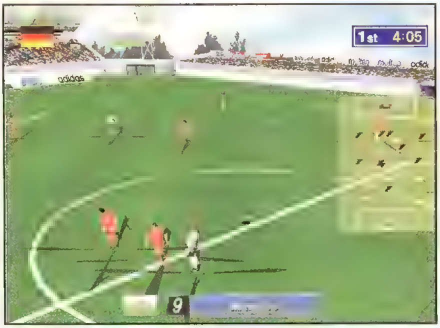
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; Dual-speed CD-ROM drive; 15MB free hard-drive space	Pentium 133 or higher with MMX; joypad

Sega may be losing the console war against Sony and Nintendo, but its games division still cranks out some of the best titles in the business, particularly in the sports arena, and *Worldwide Soccer* is no exception. Our colleagues on *Ultra Game Players* and *Next Generation* have been hooked on the Saturn version since it arrived, so the PC version demanded instant attention when it landed on my desk.

In short, this is a good 'un. It's not a great conversion, but viewed on its own merits as a PC soccer game, it's one of the better ones out there. As a die-hard fan of the sport, any simulation that glosses over the game's finer points and plays more like foosball than soccer always drives me crazy, and that's been the main criticism of most efforts released so far. *Worldwide Soccer* has a little more respect for the sport and the skill of its players than that. Like the real thing, success in *Worldwide Soccer* is achieved through good team play and individual flair. The latter aspect shouldn't be underestimated, because while most games don't allow for much ball-handling creativity, *Worldwide Soccer* bestows you with plenty of show-stopping moves executed with some great animation. There's more than just the archetypal overhead kick here, there are impressive fakes, turns, shoulder barges, slides, chest-downs, and more. Even the goalkeeper has a wider range of moves than usually seen, pulling off breathtaking diving saves and punch-aways.

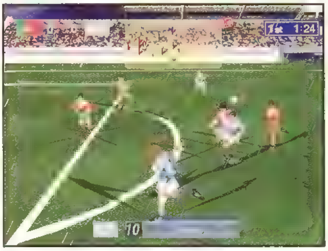
The game's context-sensitive control allows most of these moves to be pulled off with just a few joypad buttons, so the control is simple and instinctive. Play is made all the easier by the game providing you with just a few, simple viewpoints. For once, thank God, this game doesn't get carried away with elaborate TV-style camera angles, and concentrates on providing the best four basic views — goal-line, touchline, and two isometric views. There are also three variable levels of zoom, but you can't actually make adjustments mid-game — any changes you make come into effect in the next game.

All the standard options are here (exhibition, league, cup, shootout, edit player, etc.), along with a two-player modem mode and local area network play for up to four participants. A particularly neat touch is the option to easily save the replays of your goals (a simple yes/no box invites you to make the choice after you score) and store them in an archive accessible from the main menu, so you can impress your pals with your best efforts and review past glories at your leisure.



Germany and Wales square off in this one-sided contest viewed from an isometric perspective.

The problems this game suffers from are technical ones. The Sega Saturn version was clean, fast and smooth — much more so than the PC conversion, at least. Even on my thundering 166MHz Pentium the game came up short of my expectations for fluidity and framerate. The animation frames themselves are realistic, but they're just a little too juddery and slow. If, like me, you've seen the original Saturn version, you'll wonder why this PC version doesn't perform as well, and even if you haven't, you'd probably expect more fluid movement than this from your PC.



Zoomed in close from the touch-line, you can get some great views of the action.

There are other minor niggles, such as the in-game commentary which often reacts to events a little too late with silly, illogical results, and being prompted to substitute a player immediately after he's received a yellow card. There's no need for that.

All in all, though, this is a good, playable soccer game in a genre filled with garbage. My personal favorite remains *FIFA 97*, with its tremendous polish and technical prowess backed up by good gameplay, and with *FIFA 98* soon to arrive, *Worldwide Soccer* could be a redundant product, but that doesn't take away from the fact that, judged solely on its own merits, this is one good soccer game.

— Gary Whitta

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Excellent player animations; simple and fun to play; lots of action.

LOWS: Framerate is choppy; some minor presentation glitches; doesn't live up to the FIFA series.

BOTTOM LINE: A good bet for arcade soccer fans, but it falls short of the Sega Saturn original.

Achtung Spitfire

Win95

Category: Wargame

Developer: Big Time Software

Publisher: Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford
Road, Baltimore, MD 21214
(410) 254-9200

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; 8MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75 or higher

The RAF and the Luftwaffe duke it out, and the fate of England hangs in the balance in this excellent tactical simulation.

While oceans of processing power have been unleashed to simulate the experience of flying combat aircraft, it was not until 1995, when Avalon Hill released *Flight Commander 2* that PC gamers could play a game that focused entirely on operational, squadron-level tactics. I found that game to be a revelation.

Even more enjoyable was *Over The Reich*, which depicted aerial action over Europe, circa 1943-1945, in which 22 different types of aircraft were handsomely modeled. Now comes a sequel that doesn't have as many planes in it, but adds a dramatic context to the campaign mode: the Battle of Britain.

This campaign was to the European theater what Midway was to the Pacific: a period of time during which brave men drew a line beyond which the aggressors never passed. It's a story that's been told before, many times, but it remains a thrilling saga no matter how familiar it has become. *Achtung Spitfire* does go chronologically beyond the Battle of Britain (right up to the point in history where *Over The Reich* kicks in, in fact), but that campaign is the heart and soul of the game.

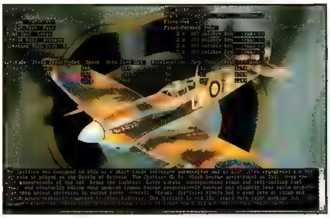
Each turn represents several seconds of real-time, during which you control the maneuvers of every plane on your chosen side. Move the joystick icon with your mouse to bank, adjust your rudders, add or decrease throttle — slick and simple. If an enemy plane can be fired upon, a crosshair icon appears superimposed over it, along with a number representing what percentage you've got of hitting it.

Speed and handling characteristics are very realistic: the Messerchmidts are faster on the straight-away and pack heavier armament, but the Spit can turn on the proverbial dime and be a very elusive target. In regards to the accuracy of these maneuvers, let me repeat what I said about *Over the Reich*: " the strongest compliment I can pay… is to say that, if you study any standard reference source about real WW II aerial tactics, and apply them while you're playing, they *work*."

You can fly single missions, including bomber escort and raids on Channel shipping, or enlist in either the RAF or the Luftwaffe for a career/campaign experience. The latter tour-of-duty mode is nicely fleshed-out: each pilot you fly with has strengths or weaknesses — some are crack-shots, and some get the jitters and abort before entering enemy air-space. Some planes may have to turn back due to mechanical problems, and reinforcements can show up unexpectedly on either side. This realism extends to command decisions: your wingman is an ace with nerves of ice, but his plane's been shot up and he's leaking oil — do you order him to go back to base, or do you ask him to stick around a while longer?

Rather bizarrely, there's an unadvertised bonus campaign that lets you fly for the French air force, taking up Morane-Saulnier 406s against ME-109s. Which means it's usually a very short career, but interesting all the same.

I especially enjoyed playing the Luftwaffe side and seeing just how close I could come to changing history. There was a brief period of time when the Germans put all their tonnage directly on British airfields and radar stations, and the Brits were simply spread too thin to cope with it. Then, as retribution for an RAF raid on Berlin, Hitler ordered his entire air force to switch targets and begin hammering London, thus giving the hard-pressed RAF a chance to rest its pilots and replenish its squadrons. You don't have to follow Hitler's mood-swings: you can just keep pounding the airfields until you win through sheer attrition.



The online encyclopedia is filled with information about all the aircraft on both sides.

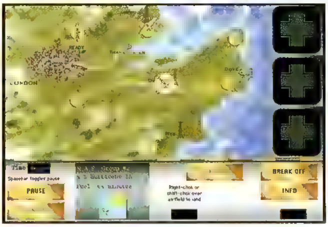
As was true in the earlier game, there's an excellent online encyclopedia chock-full of information about the aircraft and the manual is up to Avalon Hill's finest standards.

If there's any problem with *Achtung Spitfire*, it's a simple matter of redundancy. Except for the Battle of Britain backdrop, it's exactly the same game as *Over The Reich* (even down to the Wagner soundtrack, only this time it's the "Flying Dutchman Overture" instead of the "Ride of the Valkyries"). It looks the same, plays the same, and of course there were Spitfires in the earlier game, too, if you chose to fly them.

So unless you're particularly interested in the Battle of Britain, this game may be superfluous. Both games are equally good. Some dedicated players will want both titles, but if you're on a tight budget, I'd recommend buying *Over The Reich* because it offers more variety.

You can't go wrong with either game, however. They're among the best PC titles Avalon Hill has published

—*William R. Trotter*



The tactical combat engine offers a perfect example of why some games simply work better as turn-based instead of real-time.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

85%

HIGHS: Stirring battles, rich historical context, an elegant interface, involving campaign mode.

LOWS: If you're used to flying hi-tech sims, you may find this concept too abstract.

BOTTOM LINE: A remarkably intelligent design that captures the essence of WWII aerial tactics.

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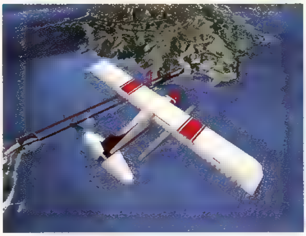

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The Hard Stuff

Seasons greetings! Once again, the holiday season has descended on us like a giant, glittery, tinsel-covered beast with hypnotic blinking eyes and tiny speakers that play "Deck the Halls" over and over. Or something.

Yes, it's that time of year when PC gamers all over the world ask their loved ones for the latest games and goodies, only to receive another mountain of socks. It's in response to that — and with the interests of our readers in mind — that we've dedicated this month's dose of The Hard Stuff to an in-depth look at socks: Is wool really warmer than cotton? Do people really wear black socks with shorts? And we'll cover the whole length controversy in our lead story: Knee vs. Calf: The Battle Rages On. Once again, *PC Gamer* punches through the hype to get the *real* story.

Okay, we're lying. But there *is* a controversy raging in the 3D accelerator world. Is 3Dfx's Voodoo Rush chip really slower than the earlier Voodoo Graphics? Believe it or not, 3Dfx admits it is — and some gamers are feeling cheated. We sort rumor from fact and get you some straight answers.

To keep things in perspective, remember that the whole Voodoo Graphics/Voodoo Rush controversy only affects a small corner of the gaming hardware world. There's all kinds of other stuff going on. In fact, you'll also notice more reviews than usual; the flood of holiday products has really taken us by storm.

That brings us to another important point: We know that we cram a lot into the limited space of the Hard Stuff every month. It's certainly not an easy task to cover the computer hardware industry in 15 or so pages. While Joel tries desperately to balance news, reviews, how-tos, Q&A, and other miscellaneous industry inside information, it's important to know what our readers want.

So drop Joel a line and let him know: would you rather see more reviews and less news (like this month's section) or are you more interested in feature-type articles? Would you rather see a larger space dedicated to following industry trends, or do you yearn for more step by step tutorials? Fire off a note to Joel at the address on the Tech Q&A page and tell him what you want!

Now dive in, happy holidays, and watch out for that tinsel-covered beast!

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How We Rate The Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication, *boot*. Between our rigorous testing and the thorough bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

WHAT'S THE Rush?

■ 3Dfx has taken a lashing on Usenet, but are the complaints justified?

The Voodoo Graphics chipset from 3Dfx is widely credited with transforming gamers' perception of 3D graphics acceleration from an interesting idea to a must-have. Through its fast, dual 64-bit chip architecture, the Voodoo Graphics made a formidable name for itself, unquestionably bolstered by its killer app: *GLQuake.*

The feature-rich, 3D accelerated version of *Quake* takes the game to an entirely new level of graphic gratification. Video cards with the Voodoo Graphics chipset became heavily in demand since, at the time *GLQuake* came out, it was the only consumer-level accelerator that could run the game acceptably. The problem with Voodoo Graphics boards is that they're not self-sufficient. They're add-in cards, requiring you to keep your existing graphics card to handle Windows and other 2D functions and free up another PCI slot for the Voodoo Graphics card.

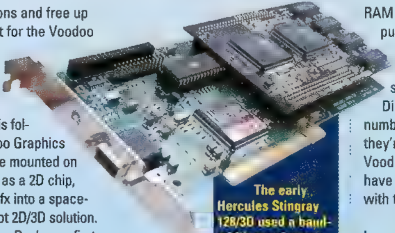
The Voodoo Rush chipset would change that. This follow-up to Voodoo Graphics is designed to be mounted on the same board as a 2D chip, transforming 3Dfx into a space-saving single-slot 2D/3D solution.

The Voodoo Rush was first introduced by Hercules on its Stingray 128/3D board. The early product revealed limitations that stood in direct contrast to a number of rumors that had been circulating prior to its release.

THE VOODOO RUSH BOARDS

The Stingray 128/3D has evolved in numerous ways since the first shrink-wrapped boxes landed on store shelves in July 1997. On the early boards, the 3Dfx components were not integrated onto a single card; they resided on a daughtercard that plugged into the 2D card. The BIOS was not software-upgradable. The board contained 6MB of total RAM and no extra features.

The first tests of the Stingray 128/3D showed promise, but like any new product, also showed the need for driver optimization.



The early Hercules Stingray 128/3D used a bandwidth-sapping connector between the AT3D and the 3Dfx daughtercard.

Hercules representatives declared that new drivers were forthcoming, and performance would improve as new driver revisions became available.

Meanwhile, Voodoo Rush boards from competitors began arriving on the market. First, Jazz Multimedia introduced the Adrenaline Rush 3D, complete with a software-upgradable (flashable) BIOS and remarkably stable first-run drivers. More recently, Intergraph unveiled the Intense 3D Voodoo, a Rush board with a similar architecture and a TV output.

Physically, Hercules' Stingray has evolved since the first version; the daughterboard was abandoned and the 3Dfx chips integrated onto the 2D board. Two more megabytes of RAM were added, and a TV output was also built in.

Overall, the three boards turn in remarkably similar — and very fast — Direct3D performance. The 2D numbers aren't blazing, but they're acceptable. Owners of Voodoo Rush-based accelerators have been generally pleased with their purchases.

There was one problem, however — or at least there seemed to be. The Voodoo Rush products didn't equal the performance of their Voodoo Graphics counterparts in what many considered the most important reason to own a 3Dfx product: *GLQuake.*

GLQuake Frame Rates

All tests were conducted on a Pentium 233 MMX with 32MB EDO RAM and used the most recent drivers available for each card.

DIAMOND MONSTER 3D:
29.4fps
([illegible] DIAMOND STEALTH [illegible])

HERCULES STINGRAY 128/3D:
26.2fps
([illegible] VERSION, WITH [illegible])

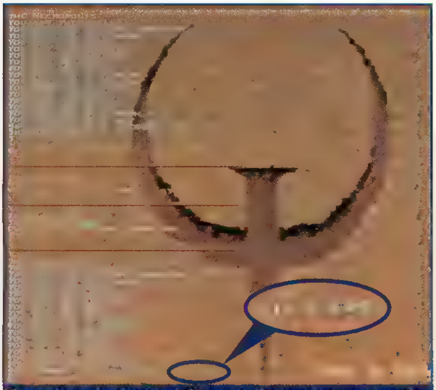
JAZZ ADRENALINE RUSH 3D:
26.6fps

INTERGRAPH INTENSE 3D VOODOO:
26.7fps

THE CONTROVERSY

At first, there was confusion. The Internet lit up with reports that *GLQuake* performance was anywhere from 20 to 30 percent slower on a Voodoo Rush board than on a Voodoo Graphics board. The reports turned to flames, and most of the outrage was focused on Hercules.

The situation worsened

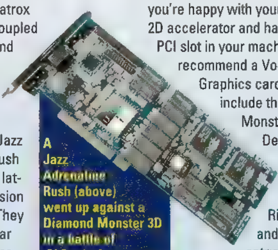


There's the number that tipped off a massive Internet controversy over the performance of Voodoo Rush.

when 3Dfx admitted that, in some instances of 3D acceleration, the Voodoo Rush chipset could never be as fast as Voodoo Graphics, no matter how good the drivers were. Questions arose as to whether equivalent performance between the two chipsets was ever promised. Hercules and Jazz denied ever making the claim, but Chris Kramer, 3Dfx's Public Relations Manager, made this statement to *PC Gamer*: "Voodoo Rush is slower than Voodoo Graphics when applications are simultaneously Z-buffered, alpha blended, and fill-rate limited. Unfortunately, we've put a perception in the market that Voodoo Rush would [perform equally to] Voodoo Graphics. At the time when those statements were made, we thought that was going to be true, but it turned out that the Voodoo Rush part was not as fast as Voodoo Graphics."

To appease disgruntled Stingray 128/3D owners, 3Dfx offered a trade-in. In exchange for the daughtercard from the early version of the Stingray, 3Dfx would provide a Diamond Monster (based on the earlier Voodoo Graphics chipset).

From that point on, all bets were off. Patrick Lucci, a marketing representative from Jazz Multimedia (and former Hercules employee), made the most concerted effort to defend his company's Rush-based product and chipset itself, even undertaking a media tour with a demonstration of the performance differences between the Voodoo Rush and Voodoo Graphics. Andy Keane, 3Dfx marketing VP, and Tamasi, 3Dfx product manager for graphics hardware, joined Lucci in presenting two identically equipped PCs (P200 MMX, 132MB RAM), one with a Matrox Millennium coupled with a Diamond Monster 3D Voodoo Graphics card, and the other with a Jazz Adrenaline Rush with the very latest BIOS revision and drivers. They ran the familiar *GLQuake* frame-rate test called a timedemo. The Voodoo Graphics machine scored a frame rate of 29.6fps. The Jazz clocked in at 27.7fps: a difference of 6.4 percent.



A Jazz Adrenaline Rush (above) went up against a Diamond Monster 3D in a battle of *GLQuake* frame rates. The Rush-based board was slower, but the difference wasn't as great as some gamers believe.

Keane dismissed the controversy, saying, "From our point of view, the effect was a very strong emotional reaction over something very small." He defended the Voodoo Rush as a viable chipset and a sound choice for performance-minded gamers.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Our own tests verify the claims Lucci and the 3Dfx representatives made: *GLQuake* is very playable on a Voodoo Rush board. Voodoo Rush is *different* from Voodoo Graphics, not only in frame rates from various games but in its architecture as a whole.

On our test machine — a Pentium 233 MMX with 32MB RAM — the difference is slightly more noticeable; the stand-alone Voodoo Rush boards in general scored 10-15 percent slower frame rates than a Diamond Monster 3D coupled with a Stealth 3000 for 2D, but were well within playable limits.

The dust will eventually settle. Throughout the controversy, one fact has been overlooked: Voodoo Rush *is* a good product. In many ways, it outperforms the Voodoo Graphics card, and, with good driver support, the *GLQuake* gap is narrowing. At this point, performance in *GLQuake* is so close between the two cards that only the die-hard, speed-obsessed gamer will notice any difference at all. On the other hand, that's a significant percentage of today's gamers.

So how do you choose a 3Dfx-based graphics card, if 3Dfx is your accelerator of choice? If you're happy with your existing 2D accelerator and have a free PCI slot in your machine, we recommend a Voodoo Graphics card. These include the Diamond Monster 3D, the Deltron Realvision Flash 3D, Orchid's Righteous 3D, and new entries from Ubisoft (the Maxi Graphics Gamer 3D) and, most interestingly, Canopus, whose Pure 3D is the only 6MB Voodoo Graphics board on the market. Virtually all of these cards run well in conjunction with nearly any 2D or 2D/3D graphics card.

If you don't have an extra PCI slot, or you're ready to replace a slow 2D board, don't rule out a Voodoo Rush-based product. But be sure you get one with a good 2D chip, software-upgradeable BIOS, and strong, stable drivers. The Voodoo Rush chipset is still a new product, and driver updates traditionally bring out the full potential of a video card over time, so good driver support from a company is imperative. Whatever the case, base your decision on your needs, and not on anybody's hype.

Peripheral Visions

The Future of Hardware

Floppy CDs

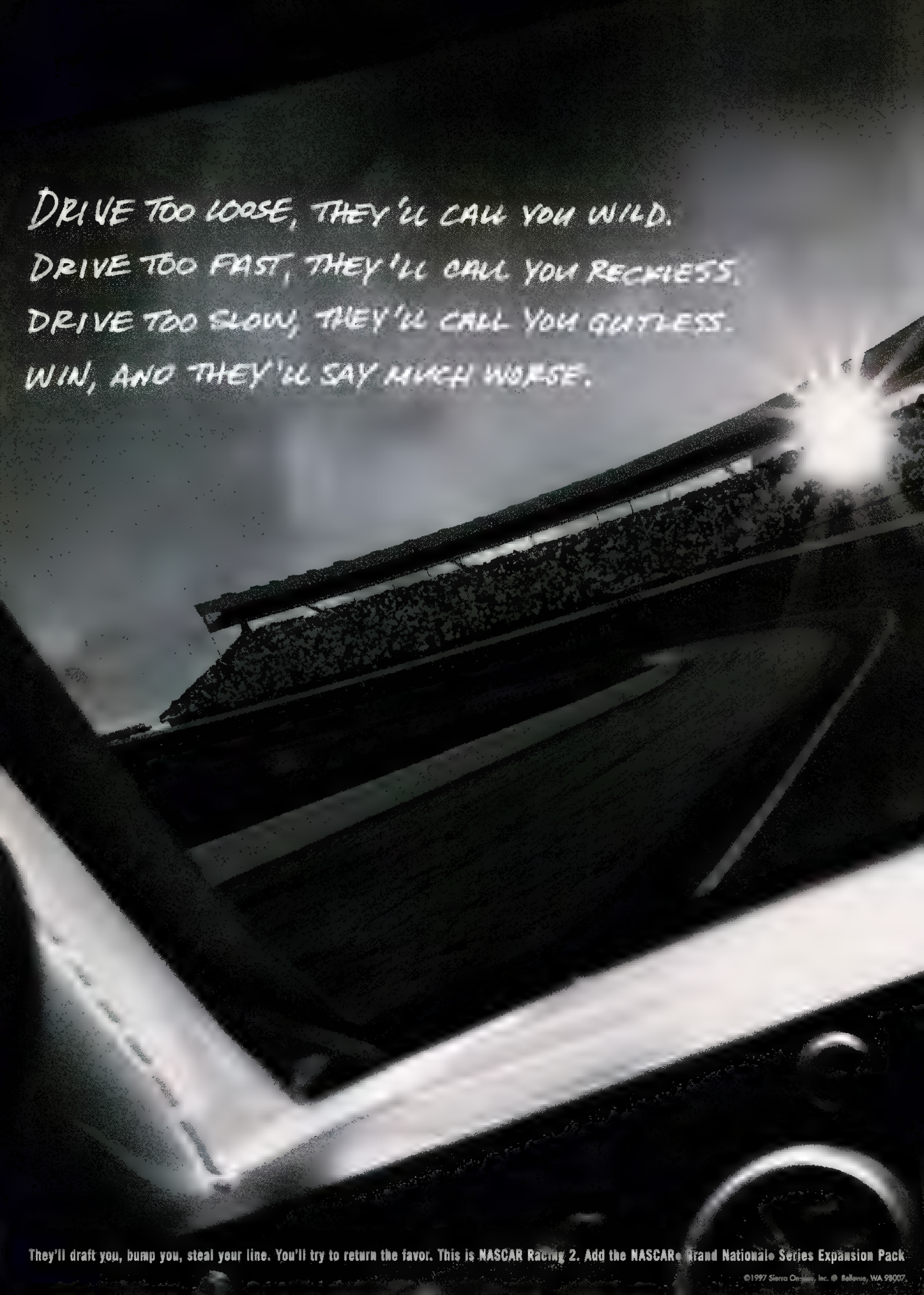
Are you still unsure what the next step beyond the 1.44MB floppy drive is? Worrying that the Zip drive may not become a standard? Whatever happened to those 100MB floppy drives, anyway?

Hewlett Packard has introduced a new version of a medium you already know: The HP SureStore CD-Writer Plus line is the first appearance of CD-RW, or rewritable CD-ROMs. Playable in any CD-ROM drive, the 650MB CD-RWs can be written over and over again, just like floppy disks. Available in an internal IDE version ($499) and an external parallel-port model ($610), the SureStore CD-Writer Plus will also burn CD-Rs.

Son of All-In-Wonder

The follow-up to ATI's Editors' Choice Award-winning All-In-Wonder is upon us. The All-In-Wonder Pro takes everything that made its predecessor great — crisp TV output, a TV tuner, video capture, and more — and builds on it. The new card incorporates ATI's powerful Rage Pro 3D accelerator chip and supports as much as 8MB SGRAM. Some other interesting features include closed-caption transcript capture (if you can't catch your favorite show, you can *read* it later), a Hot Words feature that monitors the captioning of a broadcast for a specific word or words and notifies you when they appear (i.e. "touch-down!"), and Instant Replay, which lets you instantly play back the last two to ten seconds of a show.

ATI All-In-Wonder Pro


DRIVE TOO LOOSE, THEY'LL CALL YOU WILD.
DRIVE TOO FAST, THEY'LL CALL YOU RECKLESS.
DRIVE TOO SLOW, THEY'LL CALL YOU GUTLESS.
WIN, AND THEY'LL SAY MUCH WORSE.

They'll draft you, bump you, steal your line. You'll try to return the favor. This is NASCAR Racing 2. Add the NASCAR® Grand National® Series Expansion Pack

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NASCAR® GRAND NATIONAL® SERIES EXPANSION PACK

NASCAR RACING 2

Product Information Number 313

for 12 tricky new tracks and 30 crafty new opponents. Buckle up. www.sierra.com/nascar2.

IT'S NOT JUST A GAME.

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Media-On Expert II

Company: Media-On
www.mediaon.com

Phone: (800) 552-7835 (TO ORDER)
(888) 889-2898 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $2,299 (MONITOR NOT INCLUDED)
$2,949 (AS CONFIGURED)

Media-On has constructed a very powerful computer system at an excellent price, but is it really a *gaming* PC?

In the production of a print magazine, there's always a delay between the time an article is written and the time it reaches its audience. That makes creating a computer-oriented magazine especially tricky: this industry moves incredibly quickly, and new products can begin to depreciate even before they've appeared in stores. That can lead to hardware companies being worried that a product we review will be "out of date" before the review reaches our readers.

On the other hand, how many of us are going to go out and buy everything that comes out the second it's available? Fortunately, it takes time to create software that takes advantage of a new product, and as support builds up, a good product's sales will increase. This effect actually creates a shelf-life for a product: the fact that a company *can* immediately make a product superior to the one it's just released doesn't mean the previous product won't remain viable — especially if it has developed a following.

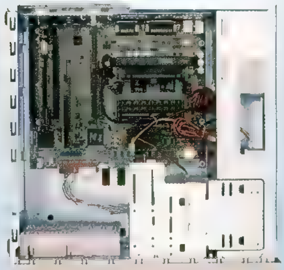
It's early October as we go to press; you're reading this in November or early December. So...do *you* think a 266MHz Pentium II with 64MB of EDO RAM is out of date? We didn't think so.

This monster from Media-On packs a major helping of power into a startlingly affordable package — and the guys who make it live on the cutting edge. They're already worried that this power-hungry, PC-user's dream is on its way out, but in reality it will be a mighty computer for a long time.

Almost all of Media-On's component choices for our Expert II were excellent. The powerful, Slot-1 processor sits on a fast Intel PD440FX ATX motherboard. Although it lacks an AGP slot, Media-On's current offerings make that an option, should you choose to order it. The 64MB of RAM takes up all four SIMM sockets.

The inclusion of SCSI drives was a nice touch; that, plus the sheer size of the hard drive, is amazing for a computer in this price range. The hard drive and CD-ROM connect to a proficient Adaptec 2940 UW SCSI controller. Speed and performance of both of the drives is excellent.

For an extra $650, you can get the excellent monitor that accompanied our system. The Sony 200SX 17" Digital Multiscan is a treat. Nearly flat, it offers a 15.9", glare-resistant viewable area and easy-to-use controls. The only drawback is the thin, horizontal line across the screen, visible in some applications and typical of Sony monitors; it's caused by a damper wire in the Trinitron picture tube. You'll see it in some Gateway Crystalscan monitors, too, and in others that use Trinitron technology; it's a small trade-off for the sharpness the technology provides.



The powerful Pentium II is loaded with 64MB of EDO RAM.

This Sony 200SX 17" monitor is a worthy display for any self-respecting game.

Getting the Expert II up and running was not a problem. The machine was fully configured and the software bundle was pre-installed — but there's not much to it. Besides Windows 95, the only other programs included are McAfee VirusScan and Electronic Arts' *Need for Speed II*.

The Expert II made short work of the bootMarks tests, with one exception: 2D, DOS gaming, and *GLQuake* performance were way off the mark. The early-model Hercules Stingray 128/3D turned out to be the culprit, lacking both stable drivers and VESA support.

Since the latest drivers from Hercules were still in beta form as this was being written, we replaced the Stingray with another 3Dfx Voodoo Rush-based card, the Jazz Multimedia Adrenaline Rush, which has similar architecture and far superior drivers. The scores leapt skyward: *GLQuake* cranked out

bootMarks

Some readers benchmark their computers with the same programs we use here — they're available to the public, you know. The bootMark suite was designed mostly from real-world games and applications to produce a realistic impression of what a computer can do, rather than spit out arbitrary numbers from testing applications that our readers can't relate to. Sometimes, however, we get mail from a reader who ran, for example, the *MDK PerfTest*, and got a score much higher than we did on a comparable system.

The bootMarks exist to produce numbers that can be used to compare one computer to the next. They were chosen six months ago, and some of the programs that they incorporated have been revised since. If we updated our programs, however, comparisons to the systems we ran the original versions on would become invalid. *MDK, Terracide, Quake*, and other games we use have seen revisions since we started using them, and those revisions make them run faster. Those are the versions we use when we're playing games — but for the sake of comparing machines we're testing now to the PCs we tested before these programs were revised, we're still using the original versions.

Norton SI bootMark: 127.6
(TESTS CPU AND SYSTEM BOARD PERFORMANCE)

Sysmark 32: 261
(TEST VIDEO AND OTHER SUBSYSTEMS)

MDK Perftest: 112
(TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)

Debabilizer Pro: 350
(TESTS MMX PERFORMANCE)

Terramark: 925
(TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)

***GL Quake* time demo:** 22.4fps
640x480 and 800x600: No VESA support
(TESTS FLOATING POINT PERFORMANCE)

***Duke 3D* time demo:** 45fps (640x480)
25fps (800x600)
(TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)

Media On
SONY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LAUER

System Specs

SYSTEM
Processor: Pentium II 266MHz
RAM: 64MB
Cache: 512K

STORAGE
Hard drive: 4.5GB Ultra-Wide SCSI
CD-ROM: 15X SCSI
Floppy drive: 1.44MB

EXPANSION
Internal 3" Bays: 2, 1 free
External 3" Bays: 1, occupied
External 5" Bays: 2, 1 free
Bus slots: 2 ISA, (1 free) 3 PCI, (1 free), 1 shared (free)

VIDEO
Video card: Hercules Stingray 128/3D
Monitor: Sony 200SX 17" (not included in price)

AUDIO
Sound card: Yamaha OPL-3 (on board)
Speaker system: JUSTer

INPUT
Keyboard: 104 key Win 95
Mouse: Microsoft 2-button

OTHER
Modem
SCSI Controller: Adaptec 2940 UW

26.5fps, *Duke Nukem 3D* climbed to 50+ frames at 640x480 and close to 40fps at 800x600, and non-accelerated *Quake* did a remarkable 22.6fps and 12.4fps in 640x480 and 800x600, respectively. The *TerraMarks* also benefited, climbing to 1,006.

Speaking of DOS gaming, getting the Expert II set up was a major chore, because — like so many system suppliers today — Media-On didn't configure DOS mode or supply real-mode drivers for the CD-ROM drive or the sound card, which is integrated onto the motherboard. While most current games are designed for Windows 95, there are still plenty of gamers who aren't ready to give up on their collections of DOS classics. We all know that not all DOS programs work in a DOS box under Win 95, and configuring a reboot to true DOS mode can be a hassle. PC makers — *especially* those targeting the gaming market — should still be configuring their new systems with a true DOS shortcut and real-mode drivers.

The placeholder speakers that came with this system don't show what the Yamaha sound card has to offer, but Media-On also carries the Yamaha M7 line of speakers for gamers with good ears. Our system also lacked any gaming controllers, but the company offers products from CH and the Microsoft SideWinder series.

Like so many computer builders, Media-On has proven it can build a heck of a system, but marketing specifically to the gaming community takes a little more effort than simply declaring that a system is for gamers. *Any* powerful PC will run games well, but there's more to a gaming machine than a fast processor. Still, that's a good start, and combined with 64MB of RAM and 4.5GB of fast hard-drive storage, it's a great core to any gaming PC. Media-On offers a well built, general purpose computer that can be turned into any gamer's dream system with a minimum of modification.

These tinny speakers are a disappointment, but Media-On offers higher-end sound systems.

Choose your expansion path well because this box doesn't leave much room for new components.

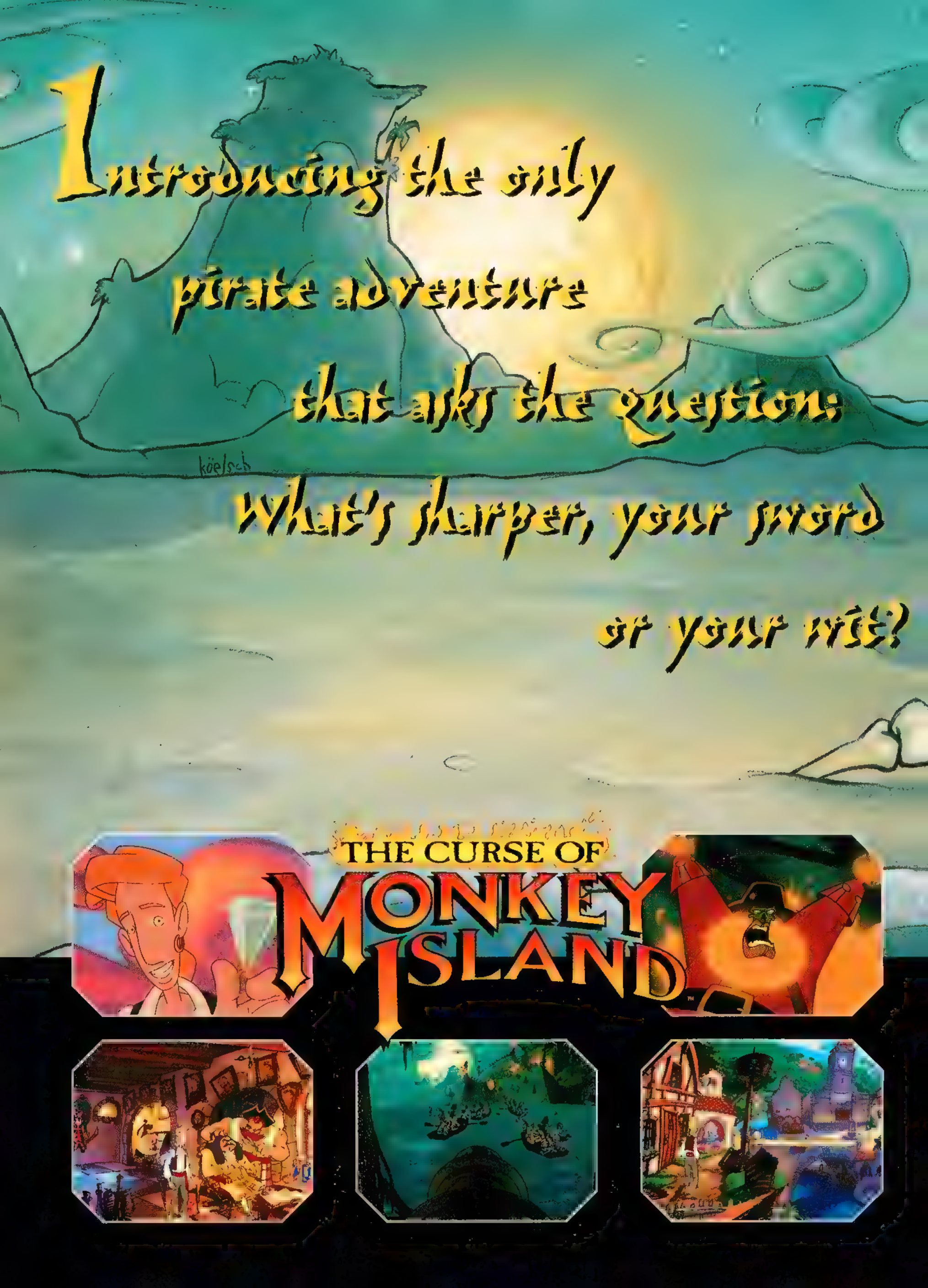
Media-On uses an industry standard ATX case, so you'll always be able to upgrade in the future.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Lots of power for the price; good choice of components.

LOWS: This is still more of a general-purpose PC than a gaming machine; some gaming needs are overlooked.

BOTTOM LINE: This system is a strong foundation for an awesome gaming computer if you don't mind doing a little modification on your own time.


Introducing the only
pirate adventure
that asks the question:
what's sharper, your sword
or your wit?
köelsch
THE CURSE OF
MONKEY ISLAND

Presenting the long-awaited third installment in LucasArts' classic adventure series, Monkey Island. With features like 30-plus hours of gameplay, 8,000 lines of hilarious dialogue, oodles of challenging puzzles, high-resolution graphics, film-quality animation and a few surprise celebrity voices. Not to mention vegetarian cannibals and a guy named Snugglecakes. So get ready to embark on a rollicking, swashbuckling graphic adventure where the seagulls have better aim than the pirates, and the sharpest weapon is your wit. **For Windows 95 CD-ROM**

Check out the playable demo in select magazines or download it from our Web site at www.lucasarts.com

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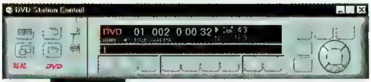
Product Information Number 225

Utobia Hollywood DVD



The DVD Station lets you control the play-back and features of your DVD movies.

Company: Utobia
www.utobiadvd.com

Phone: (888) 4-UTOBIA (TO ORDER)

Price: $399

Whatever happened to DVD? As we approach the end of the year that was supposed to bring a revolution for the new optical entertainment medium, early visions of store shelves stocked for the holiday with DVD-ROM titles haven't exactly become reality.

Fear not, though; DVD's day is coming. The computer industry isn't going to ignore a new medium that can store as much as 17 gigabytes of data on a disc the same size and shape as a CD-ROM. For the gamer who wants to stay ahead of the curve, DVD-ROM kits like the Utobia Hollywood DVD are becoming abundant.

You get a lot for the price: This complete DVD solution comes with an ATAPI DVD-ROM drive, a REALmagic Hollywood MPEG-2/Dolby Digital (or, as it was once known, AC3) decoder, and all of the necessary cables and software to make installation effortless.

Rather than rely on bus mastering, a technology that some older PCI system boards don't support, the Hollywood card uses a VGA pass-through cable to decode the MPEG-2 signals, the standard compression technique used for DVD video.

The drive does an ample job with all formats — everything except recordable CD-ROMs; like most of the first-generation DVD-ROM drives, it simply can't read them. It occupies a 5" external bay and can work in conjunction with a CD-ROM drive on the same IDE channel. Windows 95 auto-detected the drive without a hassle.

Picture quality was decent, but for some reason, the actual image is *way* out of its frame every time we played a DVD movie. The intuitive software interface makes it easy to adjust, but there's no way to save the configuration; the picture requires tweaking every time a new movie is started. The DVD Station on-screen remote control offers access to the usual gang of DVD features; subtitles, view modes, camera-angle switching, and so on — contingent upon the disc itself.

While some pixelization was visible on a computer monitor, the picture looks fine on a more forgiving TV screen. Digital and S-Video outputs make it easy to connect the Utobia to a nearby television — but the necessary cables are not included. Sound quality is, as expected, excellent.

The Utobia doesn't come with much to get you started; the only DVD disc included is a sampler containing trailers from a bunch of recent movies. Considering that this is such a new technology and most of us don't already have a DVD collection, a full movie and/or a couple of games would've been nice.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Nice price for a full-featured DVD kit; easy installation.

LOWS: No bundle to speak of; doesn't read recordable CD-ROMs discs; some picture tweaking necessary with DVD movies.

BOTTOM LINE: Utobia's DVD-ROM kit is a relatively inexpensive way to join the slowly but steadily growing DVD crowd.

Labtec Universal Subwoofer LCS-2408

Company: Labtec
www.labtec.com

Phone: (360) 896-2000 (TO ORDER AND FOR TECH SUPPORT)

Price: $59.99

By now, it's common knowledge that many PC manufacturers overlook the importance of good sound. You'll often see systems with the very latest processor, tons of RAM, good 3D acceleration, and an industry standard sound card — all capped off with cheap speakers. For most users, those little squeakers are merely placeholders, destined to disappear as soon as they can afford to trash them for something better.

Unfortunately, something better can be costly. Only recently have decent-quality PC speakers broken the $100 barrier. After taking that second mortgage to buy a computer, nobody wants to shell out more cash to replace components right away.

The thin LCS-2408 does a fair job of giving your old speakers better sound.

Labtec has come to the rescue with a reasonably priced way to make those anemic speakers sound a lot better. The Universal Subwoofer goes a long way toward adding bass depth and punch to a poor set of speakers — but it doesn't perform miracles.

The LCS-2408 hooks up between your sound card and speakers, and it employs a crossover circuit to grab and boost the low end of an audio signal while piping the midrange and high-end out to your existing speakers.

The subwoofer adds master volume and bass level controls to your sound system, and it's designed to be seated *on* the desk instead of under it. That leads us to the first problem: the woofer's sizable magnet isn't shielded well enough to sit next to a monitor — where the manual suggests you put it — without causing major image distortion. While some monitors are shielded better than others, a device designed to sit next to *anyone's* monitor should be better shielded than this.

The subwoofer frees the speakers from trying to swallow bass that they can't handle, but it doesn't do a wondrous job itself. Really deep lows buzz at high volumes, and there just isn't enough power in the subwoofer's 14 watts to kick out the kind of solid thump most folks expect from a subwoofer.

While it boosts the sound quality of most speaker sets, Labtec's Universal Subwoofer doesn't do enough to justify its price. There are better add-on woofers in this price range, and good PC speaker systems — subwoofers included — start at only twenty bucks more.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Improves sound quality of many poor speakers; adds volume control.

LOWS: Poorly shielded; not very powerful; you can get good speakers with their own subwoofers for just a little bit more cash.

BOTTOM LINE: The Labtec Universal Subwoofer is a great idea that could've used better implementation.

Saitek PC Dash

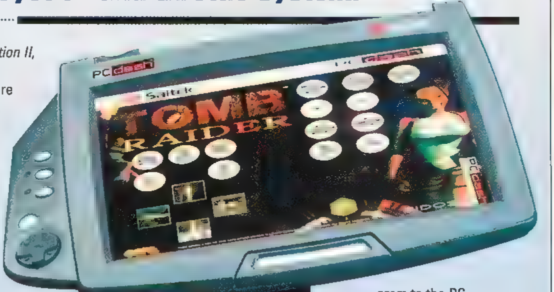
PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: Saitek Industries Ltd.
www.saitek.com

Phone: (310) 212-5412 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $69.95

Here's another innovative controller from the makers of the X36 joystick and throttle system.



The PC Dash is a programmable, touch-sensitive keyboard emulator that uses overlays to become a custom controller for any game.

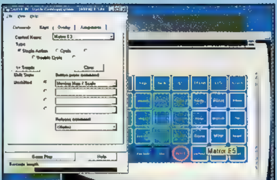
The excellent X36 programmable joystick and throttle system was probably enough to single-handedly save Saitek from relative anonymity, but this UK-based company isn't resting on its laurels. The latest great idea is a "graphic command pad" called the PC Dash.

Basically a programmable keyboard emulator, the PC Dash hooks up between your PC and your keyboard. A hinged frame lets you place command sheets over the PC Dash's flat matrix of touch-sensitive buttons, saving you the trouble of memorizing the dozens of keyboard commands some games require.

Say, for example, you're playing *Dark Reign*. With that game's overlay in place, you don't have to remember that pressing Crtl and a number key marks a group of units as a tactical squad, or that pressing Shift and that number key later will select the squad and center your view on it. You simply press a PC Dash button marked "Create Squad 1" or another button marked "Go To Squad 1."

At first glance, it seems very similar to QuickShot's MasterPilot, another keyboard emulator that uses overlay sheets to create a custom control layout. But the MasterPilot's great failing was that it wasn't programmable; it only worked with whatever games' commands were preprogrammed into a little cartridge that came with it. QuickShot said new games would be supported by additional cartridges, but to our knowledge no new cartridges have been released.

With the PC Dash, you can play any game you care to. It ships with several command sheets for popular programs, including *Red Alert, Civilization II, Microsoft Flight Simulator* (there are separate overlays for jets and prop planes) — even Windows 95. And if you've just bought a game that isn't covered by an existing overlay, you can easily create your own.



The PC Dash's Windows-based programming utility makes it easy to create new overlays.

The PC Dash's Windows-based programming utility is very similar to the software that comes with Saitek's X36. You enter a list of commands and their corresponding keystrokes, then assign each command to a button on the PC Dash. In addition to the 35 touch-sensitive keys in the overlay frame, there are two more buttons, a gamepad-style directional controller, and three modifier keys that let you assign multiple functions to any of the other buttons. A print setup utility lets you get creative with your homemade overlays, allowing you to choose the outline, colors, and typefaces used for each command — you can even specify a background image for the whole overlay. If you've got a decent color printer, you can create command sheets that look as good as the ones that come with the PC Dash.

The PC Dash goes from clever to ingenious when the time comes to load a program into it. Rather than using software to upload a new program to the unit, you simply move a slider that reads a bar code printed on the back of the overlay. Like a hand-held page scanner, it takes a little practice to get the timing down, but the PC Dash beeps to tell you if you've moved the slider too quickly or too slowly to properly read the bar code. Once you get the hang of it, it's a lot easier than loading up the programming software, selecting a program, and sending it to the PC Dash every time you switch command sheets.

When you're using homemade command sheets, you have a few options: you can print a sheet without a bar code and use the software to send the appropriate program to the PC Dash; you can print the sheet, then run it through the printer again to put the bar code on the back; or you can have the sheet printed with the bar code upside down at the top, then simply fold it over to the back — once again, the folks at Saitek prove they're really thinking their products through from a user's point of view.

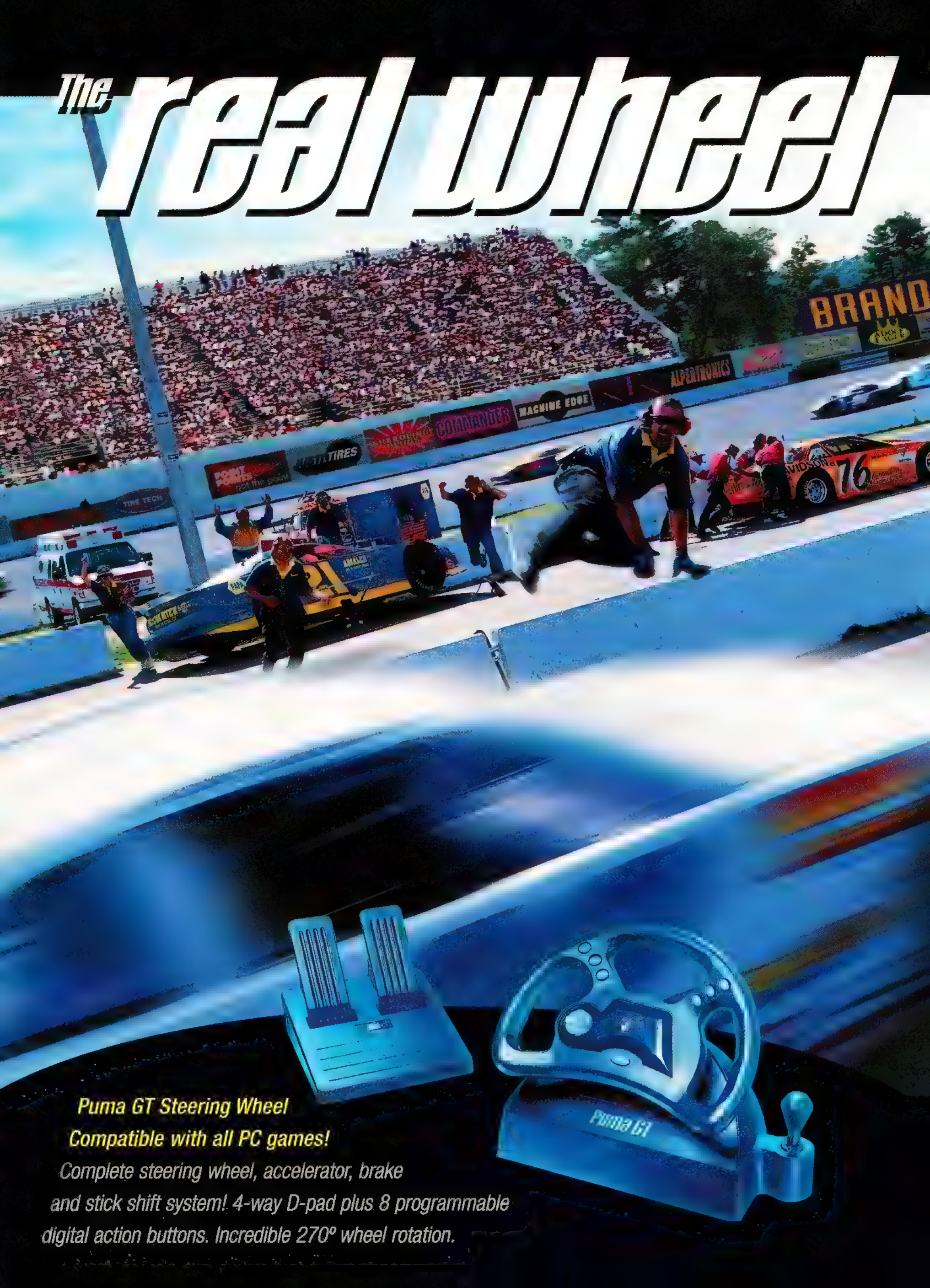
The PC Dash will never be a must-have — not as long as you have a keyboard — but in practical use it proved it could be a great convenience. If you've spent so much time with a game that its keyboard commands are second nature to you, switching to the PC Dash can actually become a hindrance rather than a help. But if you're dealing with a new game — or one with so many arcane commands you've never managed to memorize them all — it's like having an interactive keyboard reference card; instead of just reading commands off of it, you can actually use it to *issue* those commands. If you've already got a good programmable joystick, the PC Dash will complement it nicely.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: This controller is unique, well designed, and easy to program. Handy bar code system means you don't need special software to load new programs.

LOWS: Loading a program with the bar code slider takes a little practice.

BOTTOM LINE: The PC Dash is a great addition to any control setup.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COMMANDER
TIRES
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76
21
Puma GT

Puma GT Steering Wheel
Compatible with all PC games!

Complete steering wheel, accelerator, brake and stick shift system! 4-way D-pad plus 8 programmable digital action buttons. Incredible 270° wheel rotation.

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Team mad catz

Sometimes, to achieve perfect control, you've got to get a little out of control. We at Team Mad Catz take pride in going the distance for you and your game. You want perfect replication of the high-speed driving experience. We got it. The Puma GT Steering Wheel. The real wheel. By any means necessary.

MAD CATZ™

Product Information Number 238

The

Laral Unwired Stereo IR 1000

Company: The Laral Group
www.un-wired.com

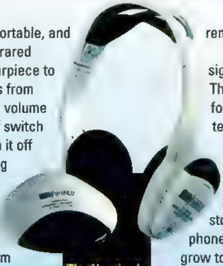
Phone: (888) 229-2118 (TO ORDER AND FOR TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $39.99

Once you've become as deeply entangled in the computer industry as we have, it's hard to be surprised by a new product. We're usually aware of every peripheral and gadget — and the claims made by its manufacturer — months before it comes out. Usually, the products that catch us off-guard went un-hyped for a reason: they leave something to be desired.

That's part of what made the Stereo IR 1000 headphones, from the Laral Group's Unwired brand, such a nice surprise — plus the fact that Laral's image was instantly tarnished by its first product reviewed in The Hard Stuff, the terrible Nintendo 3D1 joystick.

Quite simply, the IR 1000 is a set of wireless headphones. The battery-powered headset is very comfortable, and it's equipped with infrared receivers on each earpiece to accept transmissions from any angle. It sports a volume control and an on/off switch —don't forget to turn it off when you're not using it; the AAA batteries will run down after about 30 hours of continuous use. The signal comes from an infrared transmitter, which is powered by an AC adapter and plugs into the PC's sound card or any audio device with a 1/8" phono jack.



The Unwired IR 1000 headphones pump good sound to your ears no matter where you roam.

The headphones sound surprisingly good, with clear treble, strong bass, and accurate midrange. There's a slight hiss audible when the phones are receiving no signal, made worse if there's any kind of electromagnetic interference nearby; don't mount the receiver next to your monitor. The hiss is completely drowned out by the slightest sound, and when there's nothing to listen to, it's easily remedied by turning the phones off.

Like any IR device, a direct line of sight from base to receiver is essential. The range is about 25 to 30 feet, plenty for PC users and enough to let you listen to tunes a comfortable distance from the computer desk. The lack of a wire is especially liberating; if you've ever been computing with headphones, forgotten about the wire and stood up — only to have the headphones yanked from your head — you may grow to love the Stereo IR 1000.

Without the minor hiss, this would be a perfect product. As it is, it's highly recommended for anyone with a use for headphones and an interest in real convenience.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Wireless freedom; clear, responsive sound; good range; the price is right.

LOWS: Some minor noise problems; a simple automatic shut-off function would've prolonged the life of the AAA batteries it uses.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're in the market for quality headphones, you can't go wrong with the Stereo IR 100.

Metabyte Gia 3D DX

Company: Metabyte
www.metabyte.com

Phone: (510) 494-9700

Prices: $145 (M.S.R.P., 4MB AS REVIEWED)

It's been a long time since we've looked at a 3D accelerator based on S3's ViRGE chipset, for the simple reason that it's just not a real gamer's solution. The Metabyte Gia 3D DX, based on the ViRGE/DX chip, is further proof. There's nothing *wrong* with the ViRGE family — in fact, as each new set of drivers is made available by S3, the chip's capabilities increase — but compared to other current 3D chips, it's strictly bottom drawer.

Installation of the Gia 3D was easy and smooth. The first thing you'll notice is that the Gia kicks out astonishingly fast **refresh rates**: it'll max out at 160Hz at 800x600 with 16-bit color depth; it screams at 105Hz and 24-bit color in 1024x768.

With the very latest drivers, we were able to run the *TerraMark* benchmarks on the card — a torture-test ViRGE boards have never been able to handle. It managed to struggle through the first two levels, which test basic 3D functions, but it failed the advanced level-three tests. We also threw a few Direct3D games at it and got mixed results: *Jedi Knight* worked surprisingly well at 640x480, with only a few minor problems: distant textures would disappear, and there was quite a bit of tearing (visible gaps between textures). At 800x600, the frame rate was too slow for playability.

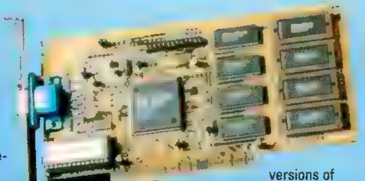
HOW IT SCORED

Terramark: 299 (failed level 3)
(TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)

Quake time demo:
17.6fps (640x480)
(TESTS FLOATING POINT PERFORMANCE)

Duke 3D time demo:
50+fps (640x480), 39fps (800x600)
(TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)

Games which use more features didn't perform well at all. *Terracide* slowed almost to a halt with most of the features turned on, and *G-Police* nearly evoked cries for help from the poor Gia in all but the most lenient display configurations. Forget about support for the accelerated versions of *Quake* and its upcoming spawn.



The Metabyte Gia 3D DX is another ViRGE-based 3D accelerator — hmm, not good.

There isn't a software bundle to justify this purchase, either. If you already have a 2D card and you're looking for 3D, consider an add on like the 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics board. And for a 2D/3D single-slot solution, the money you would blow on this would go a long way toward any one of a half-dozen better products.

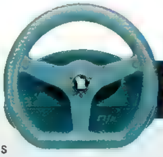
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Relatively low price; decent 2D acceleration.

LOWS: Can't compete with today's 3D graphics accelerators.

BOTTOM LINE: Metabyte made a mistake choosing the ViRGE DX chipset on its Gia 3D DX, especially this late in the game. Don't make the mistake of buying one.

CH Racing Wheel



A sleek look for a sloppy controller: don't be fooled by CH Products' good name.

Company: CH Products
www.chproducts.com

Phone: (760) 598-2518 (TO ORDER)
(760) 598-7833 (TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $89.98 (M.S.R.P.)

As a maker of joysticks, CH Products has built itself a strong reputation. About half of the editors on staff here at *PC Gamer* have CH sticks on their desks; that says a lot, considering the number of game controllers that arrive in our office every month. So we were pretty optimistic when we learned CH was planning a steering-wheel controller.

Compatible with the CH Pedals and CH Pro Pedals, the Racing Wheel is offered alone or with pedals (as the CH Racing System). But based on its performance alone, we can't comfortably recommend either package. Even a highly regarded company like CH can't get everything right, but the wheel is a considerable disappointment.

The wheel itself is constructed of hard plastic. It's textured to give you a better grip, but it lacks the padding or rubberized surface that make steering controllers from Thrustmaster and others more comfortable. Clamps fasten it tightly to your desk, and it's equipped with four buttons: one under each thumb and a corresponding button beneath each forefinger. The thumb buttons are small, flat-topped and stick out too far, making them uncomfortable — and painful — to use for prolonged gaming sessions.

This is especially a problem if you're using the Racing Wheel without pedals; the thumb buttons emulate the Y axis — usually reserved for the pedals — so one of these little buttons will be your accelerator, which you'll be keeping pressure on while racing. This problem can be overcome in games that let you reconfigure the controls; you can set up the more comfortable forefinger buttons as accelerator and brakes. But that doesn't leave any buttons for other functions (like shifting gears).

Another negative: This wheel's springs are so weak that our test unit doesn't even return to center if you turn it all the way to the left or right and let go (we checked out another one, and it didn't have that exact same problem, but its tension was just as light). Of the current crop of new racing wheels, this is the wimpiest we've encountered.

For the driving game enthusiast, even a mediocre wheel is better than a joystick — but there's no reason to settle for a poor controller when better choices are available. Even if you're a diehard fan of CH and its otherwise excellent line, steer clear of the Racing Wheel.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Relatively cheap; cool CH logo in the middle of the wheel.

LOWS: Terribly weak springs; uncomfortable grip and buttons; frustrating button configuration, especially if you're not using pedals.

BOTTOM LINE: A big disappointment, especially considering the quality of CH's joysticks. We expect a lot more from a company like CH.

Saitek X36

Grab it

If you don't say "Oooh!" don't buy it.

"Rating: Awesome... the feel of the joystick is perfect." -ALLABOUT GAMES

Fully featured throttle and stick combo with dozens of programmable killer controls

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Product Information Number 309

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"Too Much of a Good Thing."
- Games Domain
STANKY'S
BAR AN'
81
200
REDNECK RAMPAGE
Interplay
XATRIX
MATURE
M
AGES 17+
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Send a FREE Redneck online Christmas card and download the interactive preview at www.interplay.com

This season, party with Leonard and Bubba the redneck way. 'Cause it jus' ain't the holidays without guns, booze, pork rinds and some butt-ugly pig-stealin' aliens.

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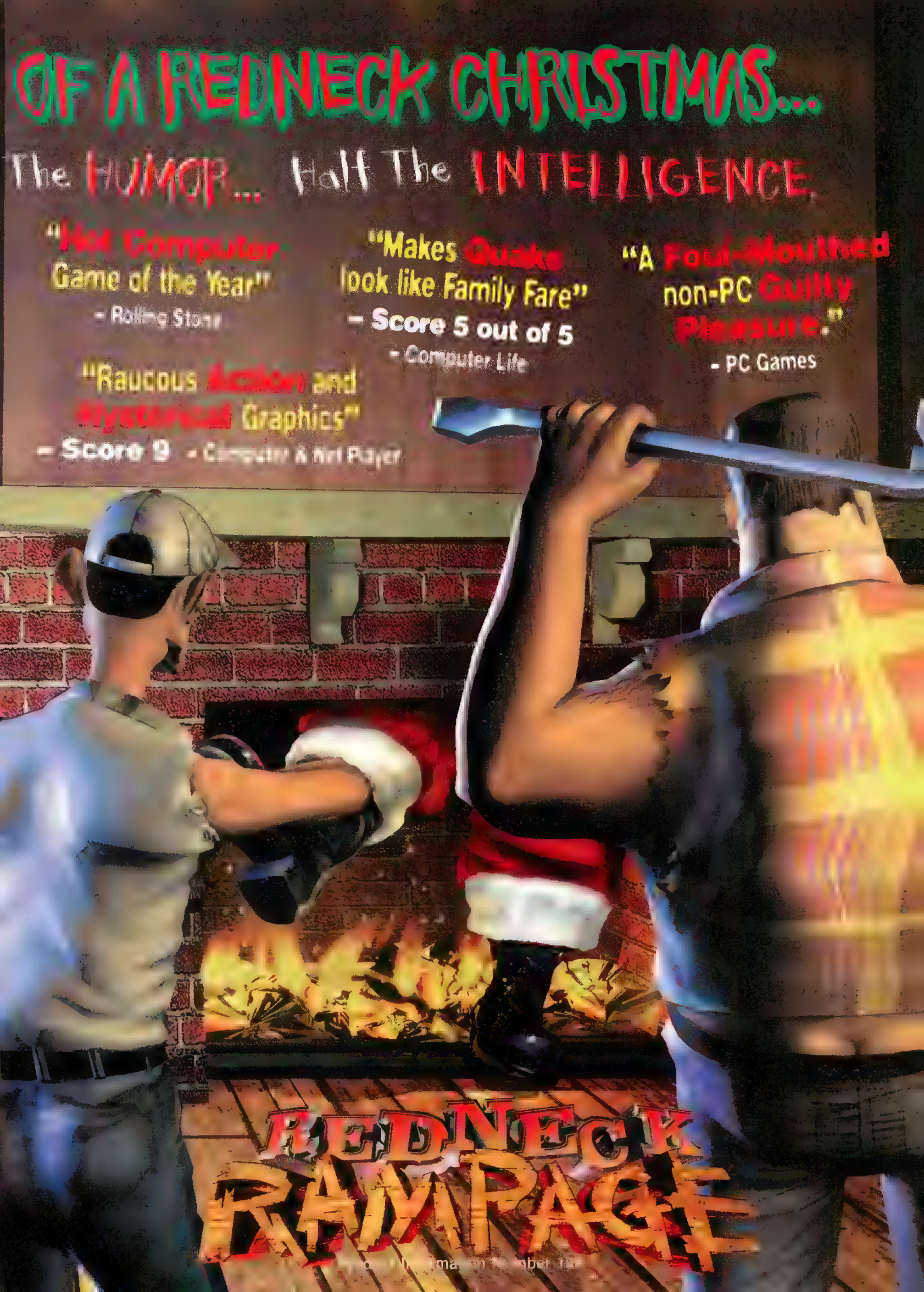
OF A REDNECK CHRISTMAS...
The HUMOR... Half The INTELLIGENCE.
"Hot Computer Game of the Year"
- Rolling Stone
"Makes Quake look like Family Fare"
- Score 5 out of 5
- Computer Life
"A Foul-Mouthed non-PC Guilty Pleasure."
- PC Games
"Raucous Action and Hysterical Graphics"
- Score 9 - Computer & Net Player
REDNECK RAMPAGE

INTENSE
3D
Voodoo
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TIME
LAP TIME

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3Dfx Voodoo Rush technology is the popular standard and is widely supported among game developers. In fact, more than 150 new 3Dfx supported games are expected to be available by the end of this year!

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Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

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www.intergraph.com

Product Information Number 197

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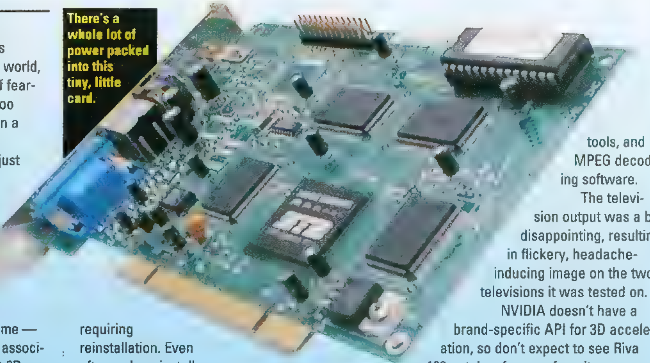
STB Velocity 128

Company: STB
www.stb.com

Phone: (800) 234-4334 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $199 (M.S.R.P.)

It's brand-new — and comes with its share of growing pains — but it's lightning-fast and packed with power.



There's a whole lot of power packed into this tiny, little card.

Just when it seems like 3Dfx is poised to rule the 3D gaming world, along comes a whole slew of fearsome competitors. The Voodoo Graphics chipset is more than a year old now, and its single-handed industry dominance just may be nearing an end. Next-generation chips are invading its space, coming from familiar powerhouses like Rendition and PowerVR as well as a name that a lot of PC gamers may not recognize right away: NVIDIA.

NVIDIA probably hopes most hard-core gamers have forgotten its name — or at least, the first consumer products associated with it. NVIDIA was one of the first 3D accelerator manufacturers to take on the thankless task of wooing the home market, and the result was the unsuccessful NV1 chipset. Remember the Diamond Edge 3D, or Jazz Multimedia's 3D Magic? No? Not surprising.

STB, marketer of many S3 ViRGE-based 3D accelerators, has taken a huge step up by offering the first board to use the new NVIDIA 3D chip, the Riva 128. It's something to behold; this card has been hotly anticipated for months, and with good reason. It's *fast.*

The Velocity 128 comes with 4MB of 100MHz SGRAM. Its single-processor, 128-bit architecture packs in every single 3D feature you can think of: polygon and pixel setup engines; VESA 3.0 compatibility; a strong video processor with excellent MPEG 1 and 2 acceleration; TV in and out capability; and the kitchen sink.

The installation process wasn't quite as impressive. We installed the Velocity 128 in four computers, including our usual test machine. Two installations went smoothly, but the other two resulted in corrupted system files within Windows 95, requiring reinstallation. Even after a clean install, we were unable to get one of the computers working with the Velocity without the mouse pointer jumping all over the place. There wasn't a hardware conflict to be found, and the computer in question had a pretty straightforward configuration. We tried more than one Velocity 128 in that machine, but we never got it working. Tech support was no help, so the card was ultimately removed from that PC. Even on working machines, incompatibilities crept up with *STB Vision 95,* STB's display utility.

On the computers it worked with, the Velocity 128 kicked butt. Under the *Terramark* test, it churned out the fastest Direct3D numbers we've seen so far, and that's saying a lot. Every Direct3D game we tested on it ran like silk. *Jedi Knight* looked fantastic and ran smoothly, even at 800x600 resolution. *MotoRacer,* included with the card, ran as well as we've ever seen it. *Terracide,* used for feature-testing only, couldn't put a dent in the frame rate.

Oddly, the rest of the bundle included non-accelerated games. A full version of *Interstate '76* is part of the package, but you'll have to download the D3D patch from Activision's web site (*www.activision.com*); the patch was probably left out of the Velocity 128's bundle because it was still in beta form. Also included are EA Sports' *FIFA Soccer 97,* a 3D animation studio called *Simply 3D,* VRML tools, and MPEG decoding software.

The television output was a bit disappointing, resulting in flickery, headache-inducing image on the two televisions it was tested on.

NVIDIA doesn't have a brand-specific API for 3D acceleration, so don't expect to see Riva 128 patches for your favorite games. Instead, NVIDIA decided to support the most popular, existing 3D APIs: Direct3D and OpenGL. Windows 95 OpenGL support isn't in place as we go to press, but it's expected by the end of this year.

So the STB Velocity 128 is not yet ready for *GLQuake* and all the new *Quake*-engine games. Testing is being done, and its performance in this arena looks to be impressive, but it hasn't been proven yet. This is a powerful card, but OpenGL-supported *Quake* clones are extremely important to a vast percentage of gamers; if you fall into that category, you may want to hold off on the Velocity 128 and other Riva 128-based boards until the chip's performance with OpenGL has been verified.

By that time, the rest of the Velocity 128's minor issues should be ironed out. Keep an eye on the Velocity 128, because this card is gonna be a contender.

HOW IT SCORED

Terramark: 1,133
(TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)

***Quake* time demo:**
19.6fps (640x480), 13.5fps (800x600)
(TESTS FLOATING POINT PERFORMANCE)

***Duke 3D* time demo:**
60+fps (640x480), 44fps (800x600)
(TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: This 2D/3D solution turned out the fastest Direct3D numbers we've seen.

LOWS: OpenGL performance unproven; incompatibilities with some computers or components.

BOTTOM LINE: STB Velocity 128 is one of the most powerful 3D solutions this side of 3Dfx. Of course, 3Dfx still owns the support market — but NVIDIA may go a long way to change that.

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Simply put, games are meant to be dominated, not merely played. And though practice may eventually get you to perfection, the Microsoft® SideWinder® Precision Pro will get you there a lot quicker.

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Microsoft

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MICROSOFT® SIDEWINDER Precision Pro

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SC&T Ultimate Per4mer

Company: SC&T
www.platinumsound.com

Phone: (602) 368-9490 (TO ORDER AND FOR TECH SUPPORT)

Prices: $129 (M.S.R.P.)

The avalanche of racing wheels is upon us, which is not too startling after the flood of driving games and sims of the past year or so. If you're hooked on *NASCAR II, Formula 1, IndyCar Racing II, Carmageddon, Need for Speed II SE,* or even *POD,* and you've been racing with a joystick, gamepad, or (heaven forbid) your keyboard, you're missing out. A driving wheel is the only way to play a racing game; once you've tried it, you'll never go back.

That's not to say that the Ultimate Per4mer is the best choice for a driving wheel. Of the half-dozen or so new wheels coming soon or already available, this isn't the pick of the litter — but it's not quite a bottom feeder, either. The Ultimate Per4mer isn't a real performer, but does have its good points.

For the price, you get a very light steering wheel with tons of buttons. Festooned with countless embarrassing stickers depicting cartoonish images of gauges and readouts, it looks a little too much like one of those toys you played with as a tot. To make up for that, you also get a set of steel reinforced pedals. The pedals attach to the wheel via a cable, and the wheel plugs into the joystick port. It's secured to your computer desk with suction cups, but SC&T says it will be including clamps in the future.

The Ultimate Per4mer comes with two Windows 95 drivers for four-button or 15-button modes. In four-button mode, all of the numerous buttons become repeats of the standard four joystick buttons; 15-button mode makes some of the buttons programmable — but only if the game you're playing supports that many buttons and lets you customize your controls.

The problem with this set is its flimsiness. The tension of the wheel and the pedals is too weak, and they're not adjustable, so using the Ultimate Per4mer feels more like driving a sedan with power steering than a race car. The pedal tension is so light, it was difficult to tell they were there, much less how far you'd pressed them.

The Ultimate Per4mer has some merits, despite its embarrassing resemblance to a child's toy.

A rubberized grip on the wheel itself would have been nice, but SC&T chose to go for a molded plastic wheel with a couple of rubber nubs at 10 and 2. The lack of anything to grab on the top of the wheel, added to its too-wide turning radius, can be frustrating.

The Ultimate Per4mer is a vast improvement over SC&T's previous driving wheel, the Per4mer, but it has still got a long way to go to compare with the best.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Well constructed; better than the previous Per4mer.

LOWS: Flimsy feel; not enough tension in wheel or pedals; too many buttons; awkward because the top part of the wheel is missing.

BOTTOM LINE: This wheel will have a hard time competing against the rest of the pack; hold off for something better.

Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo

Company: Intergraph
www.intergraph.com

Phone: (800) 763-0242 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $229.95

Let's say this: *PC Gamer* is well aware of some gamers' dissatisfaction with the 3Dfx Voodoo Rush chipset, and we know that a Voodoo Rush card scores a slightly slower *GLQuake* frame rate than cards based on the earlier Voodoo Graphics chipset. That's an issue that's going to be important to gamers who want to squeeze every last bit of performance out of their PCs, since several upcoming games are based on the *Quake* engine and may be affected.

The Intense 3D Voodoo, unfortunately, was released in the middle of the tempest over *GLQuake* performance issues, and what is most likely to be overlooked is that it's an excellent card.

Intergraph's first foray into 3Dfx territory, the Intense 3D Voodoo turned in scores remarkably similar to those of the two previous Voodoo Rush-based products from Hercules and Jazz. The architecture is almost identical: 6MB of video RAM (2MB frame buffer, 4MB texture memory) sit on a board which combines Alliance Semiconductor's AT3D 2D/3D and 3Dfx Voodoo Rush chips. The AT3D provides solid 2D performance, and the 3Dfx portion kicks out awesome Direct3D numbers. The Intense 3D Voodoo is VESA 2.0 compliant in the BIOS, so your older DOS games that require VESA support for high-res graphics will be happy.

There are a couple of extra features, which, unfortunately, don't add to the experience. Both S-video and digital TV outputs are included, but the TV quality is blurry and poor. A stereoscopic display interface is also included, presumably to support some future add-on.

The Intense 3D Voodoo can handle a maximum 1600x1200 resolution at 16-bit color depth and offers 32-bit color in resolutions as high as 1280x1024. Refresh rates are typical: a flicker-free 120Hz is offered at any color depth up to 800x600; at 1600x1200 it only does 60Hz.

The Intense 3D Voodoo's game bundle is impressive, with full versions of Jane's *AH-64D Longbow FX,* Electronic Arts' awesome *Moto Racer,* and *Turok: Dinosour Hunter,* a gorgeous port from the world of videogames.

Overall, this is an excellent card that shouldn't be overlooked.

Intergraph extends their line of excellent graphics cards with this new entry.

HOW IT SCORED

Terramark: 939
(TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)

***GLQuake* time demo:**
26.7fps (640x480)
(TESTS FLOATING POINT PERFORMANCE)

***Duke 3D* time demo:**
46fps (640x480), 37fps (800x600)
(TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: An excellent 2D/3D video card that comes with an impressive game bundle.

LOWS: Poor TV output; no support for some 3Dfx games designed for the earlier Voodoo Graphics chipset.

BOTTOM LINE: The Intense 3D Voodoo has a lot to offer to gamers, and it is a powerful, single-slot solution.

Wireless Computing SurfBoard

Company: Wireless Computing
www.netaxis.com/~jcoughlin/wireless.html

Phone: (972) 719-2578

Prices: $395

What a disappointment. Our quest for a game-friendly wireless keyboard continues...

Wireless keyboards are becoming a more practical purchase as the focus on "living room" PCs increases. So far, most of the keyboards we've seen have looked more like refugees from a laptop computer than full keyboards — and most gamers will agree that laptop keyboards are not game-friendly. The Wireless Surfboard promised to be a gamer's cordless keyboard, complete with full-stroke keys and a joystick port.

Unfortunately, we've never seen a wireless keyboard put together quite as poorly as this one. The full-size keyboard is roughly the same shape and size as the old 83-key IBM keyboards (minus a numeric keypad) and uses radio signals to transmit keystrokes to your computer. The keys feel spongy and inconsistent. The left shift key is particularly squishy, and that's not a fluke in the unit we reviewed; a second model sent to us had the same problem.

Where a numeric keypad would've been, there's a laptop-style touchpad, with the left and right mouse buttons located below it. The unit also has a port for a normal PS/2 mouse, but it doesn't ship with an adapter for serial mice (although Wireless Computing says it will ship you one for free). The keyboard's built-in game port didn't work properly with digital joysticks — operation is limited to analog, four-button functionality.

Even after getting things plugged in and running, you can expect lackluster performance. There's a significant lag between the time you press a key and when it registers on the computer. The mouse becomes jumpy, and the precise control needed in most games is simply impossible. A slight delay is inherent to any wireless controller, but it was more noticeable with the SurfBoard than with most others we've tried.

Combine all these faults with a very high price, and you end up with a product that'll probably disappoint any gamer who ends up buying it.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: RF communication doesn't require line-of-sight; joystick port and full-stroke keys are rare on a wireless keyboard.

LOWS: Shoddy construction; mushy feel; iffy joystick support; no numerical pad; high price.

BOTTOM LINE: This keyboard has a few merits, but those merits don't make up for the problems; it's not nearly worth its high price.

Play the game
Not the keyboard.

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New...Revolutionary Keyboard Simplifier for PC Games

slide in a command sheet
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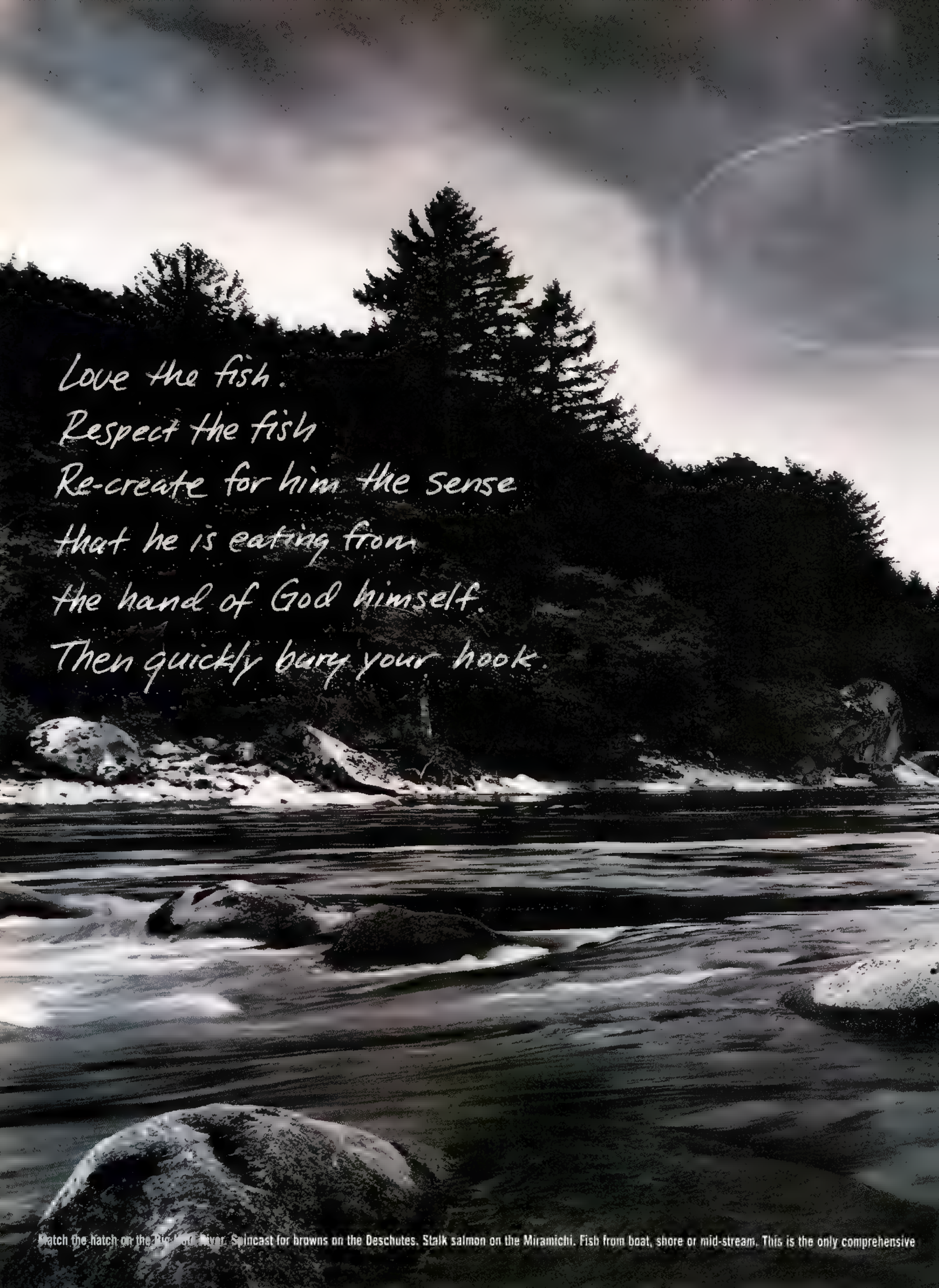
Saitek
Visit our web site at http://www.saitek.com

Product Information Number 308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that he is eating from
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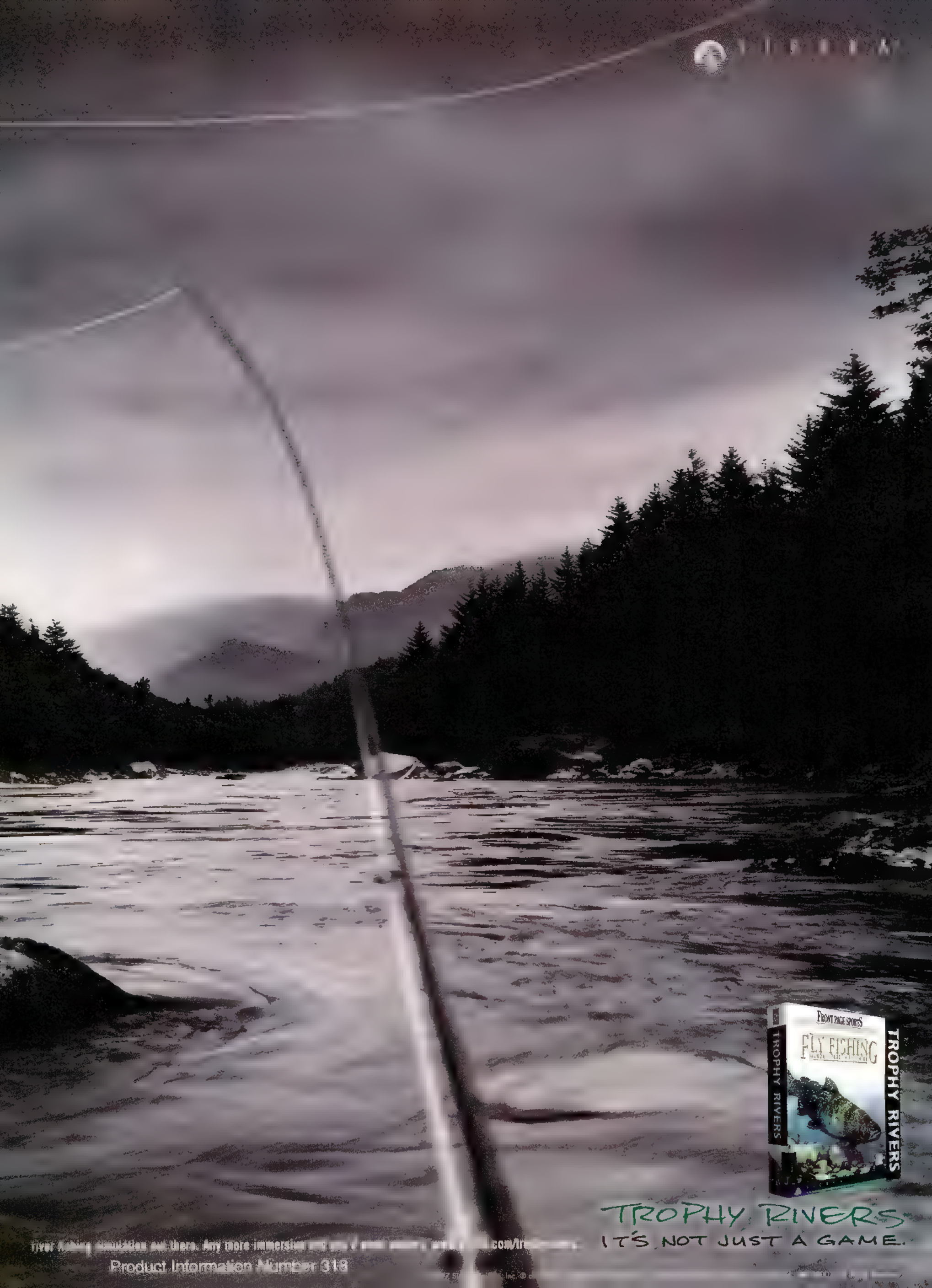
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Product Information Number 318

Where the hell...
...did you get those cards?

the tap symbol and the mana symbol [illegible] Wizards of the Coast, Inc. [illegible] from Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All other trademarks

THE CRITICS AGREE

"MicroProse's game offers weeks to months of gameplay."
Computer Gaming World, June '97

★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is just what the Samite Healer ordered."
Computer Games Strategy Plus, June '97

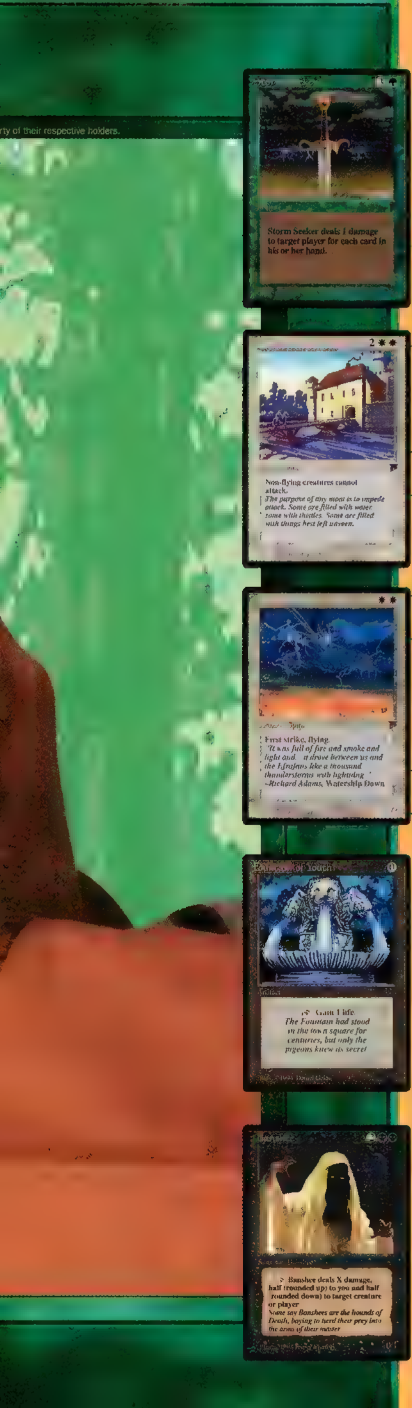
★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is a near-perfect translation of the card game."
PC Magazine, June '97

★★★★

"...hard–core gamers will appreciate the flexibility offered in the computer version."
Newsweek, April '97

rty of their respective holders.


Storm Seeker deals 1 damage to target player for each card in his or her hand.
Non-flying creatures cannot attack.
The purpose of any moat is to impede attack. Some are filled with water some with thistles. Some are filled with things best left unseen.
First strike, flying
"It was full of fire and smoke and light and ... it drove between us and the Efrafans like a thousand thunderstorms with lightning."
–Richard Adams, Watership Down
Fountain of Youth
Gain 1 life.
The Fountain had stood in the town square for centuries, but only the pigeons knew its secret.
Banshee deals X damage, half (rounded up) to you and half (rounded down) to target creature or player.
Some say Banshees are the hounds of Death, baying to herd their prey into the arms of their master.

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DUELS OF THE PLANESWALKERS™

Introducing the most complete arsenal for playing *Magic*™ over the Internet.

The stakes have been raised and the battle lines broadened. Now it's time to face your greatest challenge in the most competitive Magic environment on Earth.

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This special edition of *Magic: The Gathering*® for the PC includes the original game, plus built-in Internet multiplayer, new cards you can't get anywhere else, and an enhanced interface.

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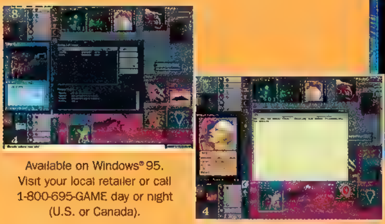

MAGIC
The Gathering
DUELS OF THE PLANESWALKERS

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(U.S. or Canada).

Product Information Number 234

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MILLENNIUM 3D

Millennium 3D Inceptor™

Put real Space Shuttle technology into your hands with the latest in next generation 3D gaming. Millennium's 3D pitch-over, fast action grip allows players to wipe out opponents like no other joystick. 100% digital technology for precise control and instant setup makes this a killer stick.

Rage 3D™

This futuristic 3D/2D gamepad with analog accuracy and digital speed gives you unbeatable in your face gaming. Rage's revolutionary ergonomic design allows for endless gameplay and enables up to 4 players to play at once.

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Experience the thrill of real NASCAR racing action with the hottest wheel on the track. Super-realistic design, quick clamp set-up and great feel puts you in the driver's seat for all your favorite racing games.

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ThrustMaster Inc., 7175 NW Evergreen Parkway #400, Hillsboro, OR 97124, 503-615-3200

Product Information Number 338

The Hard Stuff Sideways Page

WE REVIEW SO MUCH HARD STUFF EVERY MONTH, it can be hard to keep track of what's hot and what's not. On this page, we dare to compare hardware we've reviewed in past issues. In fact, there's so much data, we had to turn the page sideways to make it all fit! This month: joysticks!

JOYSTICK	ISSUE REVIEWED	PRICE WHEN REVIEWED	NUMBER OF BUTTONS	PROGRAMMABILITY	AMBIDEXTROUS?	FUNCTION	COMMON FEATURES	COMMENTS
CH Force FX	May 1997	$249.95	8	–	No	General purpose	FF, HS	The first force feed back joystick. Typical CH quality.
ACT Labs PowerRamp	May 1997	$59.95	Tons	Hardware or software	No	Arcade games		Arcade stick. Very large base. Keyboard emulator. Very programmable.
Logitech Wingman Extreme Digital	June 1997	$49.95	8	Software	No	General purpose	HS, TH	Comfortable handle. Great feel. Excellent for action games.
ACT Labs Eaglemax	July 1997	$59.95	14	Hardware or software	No	General purpose	HS, TH	Easily programmable. Lots of buttons. Very comfortable.
InterAct Magnum 6	September 1997	$44.95	8		Yes	General purpose	HS, TH	Too stiff. Light base. Unstable. Extra buttons are useless.
Gravis Blackhawk	September 1997	$34.95	4	–	No	Action games	–	Quite comfy. Good tension. Very small handle. Fourth button on base, not stick.
Saitek X36	October 1997	$149.95 (includes throttle)	Tons	Software	No	Flight sims	HS, TH	Stick and throttle make an awesome combo. *Tons* of features. Our most highly recommended joystick.
Logitech CyberMan II	October 1997	$99	8	Software	No	3D shooters	–	Not really a joystick, but a 6-axis, 3D controller. Touchy and hard to master.
Suncom FX1000	November 1997	$14.99	2	–	Yes	Action games	–	Comfortable. Typical woes of a bargain stick: flimsy and imprecise.
Laral Group Nintendo 301	November 1997	$69.99	8 (only 4 used at one time)		No	Action games	HS, TH, T	Uncomfortable, bad tension, unstable base, generally bad.
Gemini Maverick	November 1997	$44.99	4		Yes	General purpose	HS, TH	Comfortable. Wide range of motion. Smooth movement.
Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro	November 1997	$149.95	8 (shift button doubles functionality)	Software	No	General purpose	FF, HS, TH, T	Excellent grip. Good programming interface. Nice force feedback implementation. No DOS support.

JOYSTICK KEY

Indicates how a stick is programmed: through a software interface, a method built into the stick, or both.
which many sticks offer, include force feedback (FF), throttle (TH), hat switch (HS), and a twist axis (T).

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A roar of raw power shakes you from the inside while your heartbeat fights to be heard over the wind buffeting your helmet.
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Sound creates moments. It delivers them. And it should never be compromised or limited by technology. With True Digital Audio, Altec Lansing has achieved audio accuracy never before possible from a computer.

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Product Information Number 93

Tech Q&A

Got a question about PCs? Got a problem with a stubborn peripheral? Got a tip you'd like to share? Send 'em here!

Q My problem is trying to delete certain programs through the "Add/Remove" menu in Control Panel. I tried to delete some programs that came with the system, but it said that it couldn't be deleted. I can delete them through Windows Explorer but the program name in the "Add/Remove" menu remains there. Is there anyway to get rid of the name?

— Jamie Leake, via the Internet

A There is a way to get rid of those phantom programs cluttering up the Add/Remove Program dialog, and it requires editing the Windows 95 registry. Before you do, however, you need to know in advance that if you have to be extremely careful while altering the registry; it's not recommended for novice users. If you make a mistake, your computer might not boot up again.

If you're feeling brave, go to the Start menu and select Run. In the text box, type REGEDIT and click OK. A program called Registry Editor will open.

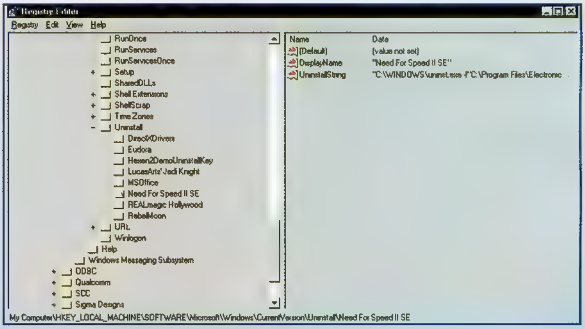
At first, it may look a lot like Windows Explorer. Navigating through the two programs is indeed similar, but the data that you see is very different. While Explorer shows you your computer's file system, Registry Editor lets you pick through the data that Windows 95 needs to interact with the computer it's installed on, and many of the customizations and other miscellaneous, dynamic aspects of the GUI are stored in the registry.

First off, you will see a split window with six folders on the left-hand side. The information you're looking for is in the folder called HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE, so click on the little plus-sign next to that folder. The folder will expand, and you'll see the its contents in the hierarchical form typical of Windows Explorer. The next folder to expand is called SOFTWARE, followed by folders called Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion and finally, Uninstall.

The Uninstall folder will have a number of sub-folders which relate to the Add/Remove programs applet in Control Panel. To see the contents of each folder, click on it. The right side of the window will show more data about the contents of that folder, and one of the categories is called DisplayName. The value for that category (or string) is the name of the Add/Remove Programs list entry.

Delete the entire folder of each program you want to remove from the Add/Remove Program window. Highlight the folder by right-clicking on it, then hit the delete key. A box will pop up confirming your wish to delete that folder (or key, as registry folders are called).

When you've deleted the key for each entry you want to get rid of, close the Registry Editor. The next time you fire up the Add/Remove Program applet, they'll be no more.



```
        RunOnce
        RunServices
        RunServicesOnce
      + Setup
        SharedDLLs
      + Shell Extensions
      + ShellScrap
      + Time Zones
      - Uninstall
          DirectXDrivers
          Eudora
          Hexen2DemoUninstallKey
          LucasArts' Jedi Knight
          MSOffice
          Need For Speed II SE
          REALmagic Hollywood
          RebelMoon
      + URL
        Winlogon
      Help
    Windows Messaging Subsystem
  + ODBC
  + Qualcomm
  + SCC
  + Sigma Designs
```

Name	Data
(Default)	(value not set)
DisplayName	"Need For Speed II SE"
UninstallString	"C:\WINDOWS\uninst.exe -f"C:\Program Files\Electronic

My Computer\HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall\Need For Speed II SE

While you can cut unwanted entries in the Add/Remove Programs dialog out of your registry, be sure not to delete anything else in the registry.

Q I've got a tip for people on a fairly low budget — you know, the ones that have to hide from their wives to buy upgrades. I wait until the next version of a product is ready to come out, then I make my move. For example, I just got myself an Orchid Righteous 3D for $99, brand-new with all the warranties I do the same with processors and CD-ROMs — I paid $50 for my 12x CD-ROM. So I've gotten myself a pretty good machine for a lot less money. Just keep your eyes open and surf the Internet for specials (and, please, do it when the wife isn't home and remember to get the credit card bill before she does). I can't wait for all those really fast processors to come out so I can buy a "slow" 200MMX really cheap.

— Walter Ramirez, via the Internet

A Waiting for technology to go 'stale' before buying is a good way to save money, but some discretion is required. Some items, such as high speed CD-ROM drives or hard drives, will remain useful for years to come. Just as Walter did,

Need Help?

If you have a hardware question or comment, write to us at:
The Hard Stuff, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005
or send E-mail to:
jdurham@pcgamer.com

The Game Machine

Every month in The Game Machine, we'll tell you what features to look for in a good gaming PC that won't break the bank or become obsolete before you get it home. With the price of CD-ROM drives still dropping, there's no longer any reason to settle for an old 8x drive. So this month, we upgrade the CD-ROM drive in our under-$2,500 machine. 16x drives can be had for less than $100 if you shop around. Based on the current crop of games, a P200 MMX and the rest of the components here can do justice to anything on the shelves.

- Intel Pentium 200 MMX
- 32MB EDO RAM
- 128-bit 2D graphic card
- 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics-based 3D accelerator
- 2GB IDE Hard Drive
- 16x CD-ROM drive
- Sound Blaster AWE32
- 15" Super VGA monitor
- Programmable joystick
- Multi-player gamepad (Gravis Gamepad Pro or Microsoft Sidewinder)
- 33.6Kbps modem

you can often get a brand new, fast CD-ROM drives cheap because there are even faster ones on the market; smaller-capacity hard drives ("small" means 1GB these days) are dropping in price as larger drives come out. A fast Pentium processor should get you through the next few years, until the Pentium II 333MHz chips have been outclassed and you can buy one of *those* inexpensively.

A word of warning: use care and do plenty of research before buying a new component for your PC, and when you find a low-cost product, make sure it's exactly what you want. While waiting until a product is no longer top-of-the-line can save you money, you should also be as sure it'll be supported for as long as possible.

Q Greetings. I have a bit of a tech problem: I recently bought an Iomega Zip drive, which takes the drive letter E. When my Zip drive is hooked up, my letters are A, C, D, E (Zip drive) and F (CD-ROM). When my Zip drive is not hooked up, the CD-ROM takes the letter E (instead of F). Now, that screws up my shortcuts that execute directly off of the CD-ROM. Is there any way to make the computer keep the letter E for my Zip and F for my CD-ROM even if my Zip drive is not hooked up?

— Brian Hendel, via the Internet

A Yes there is, Brian, and it's simpler than you might imagine. It sounds like you're using Windows 95, but for the sake of our readers, we'll look at both Win 95 and DOS.

To specify a letter for your CD-ROM drive in DOS, it's a matter of adding some information to a line in your AUTOEXEC.BAT. Open your AUTOEXEC.BAT with a text editor and find the line that loads MSCDEX.EXE. It will probably look like this:

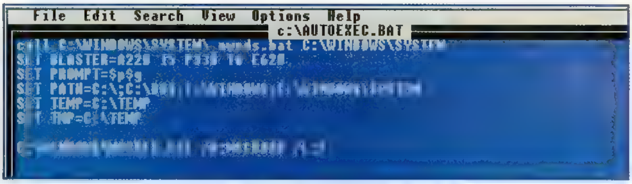
```
C:\WINDOWS\MSCDEX.EXE /D:MSCD000
```

There may be other information in this line, and it may be preceded with the command LOADHIGH or another memory-manager protocol. To the end of the line, add /L:F. If there is already a /L switch, change its value to F — or whatever letter you wish to designate for your CD-ROM. In our example, the modified line will look like:

```
C:\WINDOWS\MSCDEX.EXE /D:MSCD000 /L:F
```

In Windows 95, you'll have to use the Device Manager. You can do this by right-clicking on My Computer and choosing Properties from the pop-up menu. Click on the Device Manager tab, expand the CD-ROM in the list of devices, highlight the drive in question, and click Properties. Another window with information about your CD-ROM drive will pop up. Click on the Settings tab.

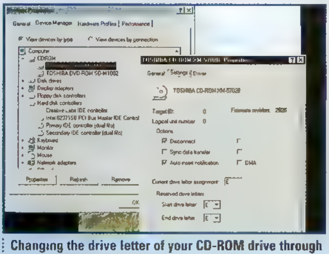
At the bottom of the Settings window, there's a box entitled Reserved drive letters. Change both the Start drive letter and the End drive letter to F (or whatever drive letter you want to assign to your CD-ROM drive). Click OK, then click OK in the System Properties window. Reboot your machine, and your CD-ROM will forever be your F drive — at least until you decide to change it again.


File
Edit
Search
View
Options
Help
c:\AUTOEXEC.BAT

```
call C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\ [illegible]nds.bat C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM
SET BLASTER=A220 I5 P330 T6 E620
SET PROMPT=$p$g
SET PATH=C:\;C:\[illegible]
SET TEMP=C:\TEMP
SET TMP=C:\TEMP

C:[illegible] /L:F
```

To change a CD-ROM drive's letter in DOS, you have to edit your AUTOEXEC.BAT file.


General
Device Manager
Hardware Profiles
Performance
View devices by type
View devices by connection
Computer
CDROM
TOSHIBA DVD-ROM SD-M1002
Disk drives
Display adapters
Floppy disk controllers
Hard disk controllers
Creative Labs IDE controller
Intel 82371SB PCI Bus Master IDE Control
Primary IDE controller (dual fifo)
Secondary IDE controller (dual fifo)
Keyboard
Monitor
Mouse
Network adapters
Properties
Refresh
Remove
OK
TOSHIBA CD-ROM XM-5702B Properties
General
Settings
Driver
TOSHIBA CD-ROM XM-5702B
Target ID: 0
Firmware revision: 2826
Logical unit number 0
Options
Disconnect
Sync data transfer
Auto insert notification
DMA
Current drive letter assignment: E
Reserved drive letters
Start drive letter E
End drive letter E

Changing the drive letter of your CD-ROM drive through Windows 95 is as easy as this.

Glossary

Every month, the Glossary will define terms that appear in The Hard Stuff and may be new or confusing to some readers.

Color depth

Refers to the number of colors that can be displayed at one time. The number of available colors for each of the pixels that make up an image is determined by the number of data bits dedicated to each pixel. By using a combination of the values of several bits, programs can give each pixel one color out of 16 colors (4 bits per pixel), 256 colors (8 bits per pixel), 65,536 colors (16 bits per pixel), 16,777,216 colors (24 bits per pixel), and more. A game that boasts 16-bit graphics uses a Super VGA mode capable of displaying 16,777,216 different colors in one image, but that doesn't mean the game's graphics will always — or ever — use all of those colors.

Engine

In software, the engine is a component that performs a basic function of a program. Some examples: A game engine is the core of the game, which handles the processing of user input and translates it to action on the screen. A 3D engine is a method of displaying three-dimensional graphics. The 3D engine may be wholly dependent on software code (as in *Doom*, *Ultima Underworld*, and early flight sims) or it may use some dedicated 3D hardware to assist in the animation process (*GLQuake*, *Shadows of the Empire*, *G-Police*, and many current games.)

Refresh rate and frame rate

Some novice gamers have a tendency to get the meanings of these two video-oriented terms mixed up, and it's no surprise; they refer to very similar processes. In each case, the terms refer to the picture on your display being recreated over and over again.

Refresh rate is a measure in hertz (Hz), or cycles per second, of how frequently a monitor display is updated. The faster the refresh rate, the more often the picture on the screen is redrawn, and the less flicker is visible. Even if nothing on the screen is moving, a display with a low refresh rate will flicker noticeably. The refresh rate of a display is determined by the capabilities of your graphics card and your monitor, and they vary from one resolution to the next. VGA standard refresh rate was 60Hz, but newer monitors and Super VGA display adapters are capable of much faster refresh rates.

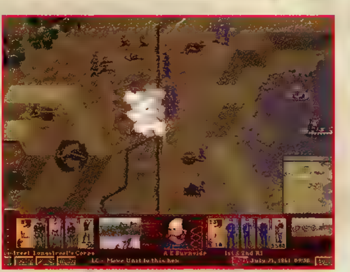
Frame rate is a measure of how often new frames of an animation appear on the screen. It's measured in frames per second. A frame is one still image; animation is accomplished by displaying lots of frames, one after the other. This is totally independent of the monitor's refresh rate. The more frames that appear in a second of animation, the smoother it'll appear. The frame rate in a game is determined by the processing power of the computer, the speed of the video card, the efficiency of the game engine, the complexity of the graphics, and many other factors.

NOT JUST GETTYSBURG.
NOT JUST SHILOH.
THE WHOLE CIVIL WAR

GRANT · LEE · SHERMAN
CIVIL WAR 2
GENERALS

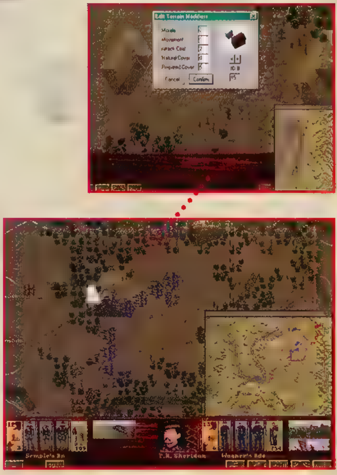
Sequel to the best selling Civil War game of 1996

DON'T SETTLE for a slice of history when you can have the whole bloody cake. The battle begun with the best-selling Robert E. Lee: Civil War General continues with 40 authentic battles. Rally the troops and take command as you rewrite history with Civil War Generals 2: Grant, Lee, Sherman.


Longstreet's Corps
Move Unit to this hex
A E Burnside
July 21, 1861 09:50

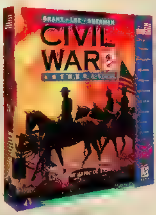
New Unit Types

POWERFUL MAP EDITOR


Edit Terrain Modifiers
Morale
Movement
Attack Cost
Natural Cover
Prepared Cover
Cancel
Confirm
Semple's Bn
P.H. Sheridan
Wagner's Bde

ALL-NEW FEATURES:

- Fight in Eastern or Western battle theaters as Union or Confederate.
- Map Editor allows you to challenge opponents on your own customized battlefields.
- Command your troops in an overhead view or zoom in for close-up detail.
- New reenactment film footage from Jay Wertz.
- Even more artwork from Mort Kunstler.
- New unit types include siege mortars, horse artillery, frigates and gunboats.
- New terrain includes forts, walls, swamps, water, major roads and coastline.
- Head-to-head play via modem, LAN, Internet and e-mail.
- Battle for FREE on Sierra's Internet gaming system.


GRANT • LEE • SHERMAN
CIVIL WAR 2
GENERALS

Impressions SIERRA®

Download the interactive demo at www.sierra.com

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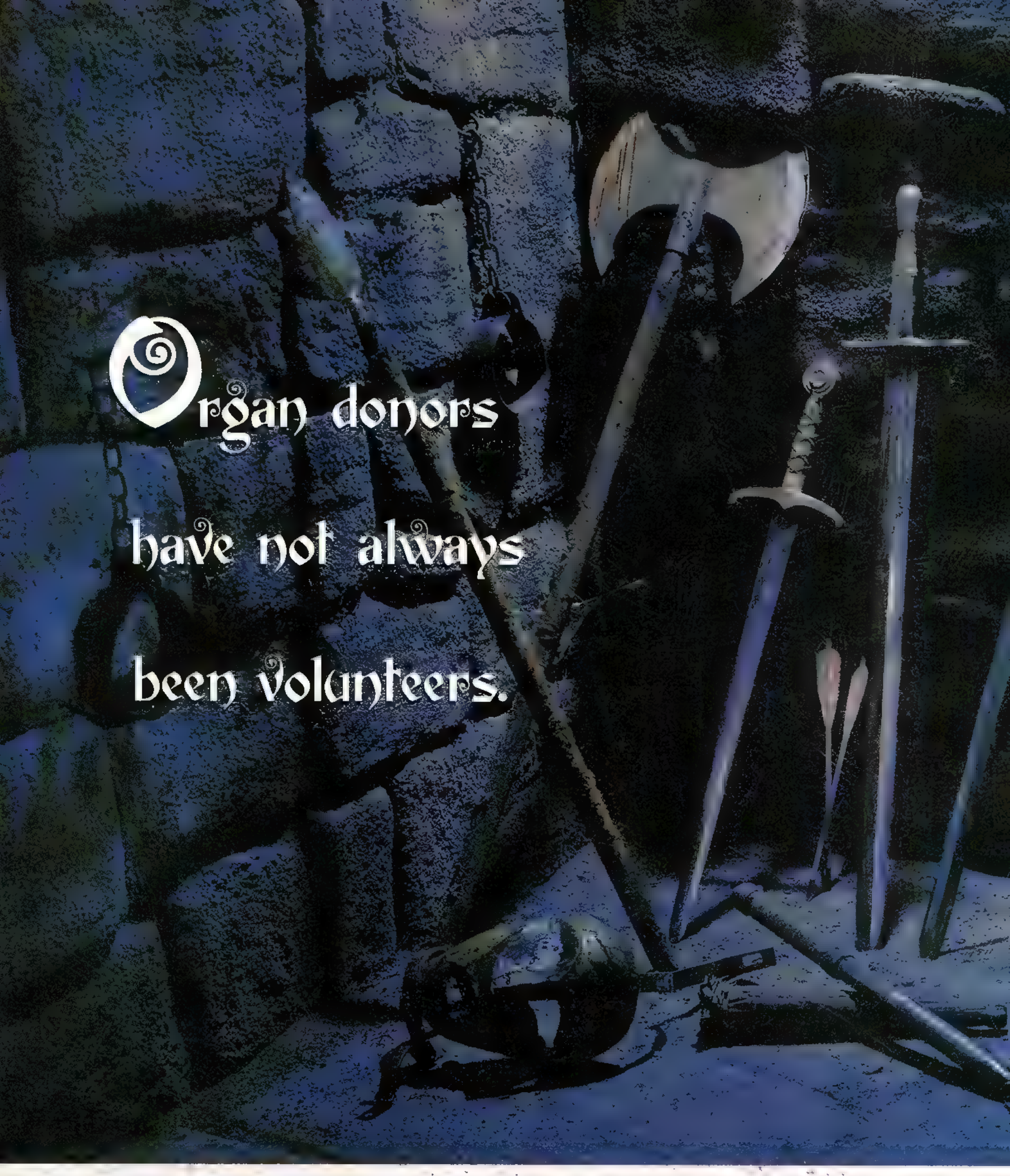
Product Information Number 320


Organ donors
have not always
been volunteers.

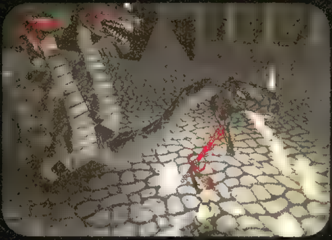
IAN LIVINGSTONE'S
DEATHTRAP
Dungeon

Before the days of stain-free carpets, earplugs and the novelty known as mercy, things were generally quite crimson. What with the slow of wit and the weak of limb spilling their guts on a daily basis, surely you can imagine

EIDOS HINT LINE 1-900-773-4367. Cost of call $0.95/minute. Must be 18 years or have parent's permission
Touch-tone required

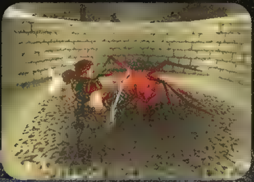
Send enemies off in a Dragon's bile blaze of gory 3-D detail.

Splatter your way through 10 torturous levels of mazes, corridors, dungeons, and traps.



Vex or ventilate 55 contrary denizens including Orcs, Dragons, Mummies and Zombies.

Play online with up to 4 mutually demented peers (pc version only).



Master 13 horrific implements, including swords, hammers, muskets, magic spells and your bloody bare hands.

the grim fun you've missed. Now it's time for your bath.
So plunge on in or look away, but make up your mind.
While you still have a choice.

www.deathtrapdungeon.com

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PC CD

PlayStation

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

Product Information Number 132

A NEW BREED OF RPG

EVERYTHING ELSE
AD OR DYING
BY GAMERS FOR GAMERS™
Interplay
MACPLAY
CD-ROM
Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
MATURE
M
AGES 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

The Un
natural
nation
and th
out wa
fields.

In lat
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54

State-of-the-art digital animation lets you see the emotions of the people you talk to. Watch someone smile at your compliment or grow angry at your insults! Your decisions will have significant moral implications.

emotions of the

6, China attacks Alaska over
drops of oil in the world.
force, but it will be ten years
r. In a desperate maneuver,
eighboring countries in
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S military
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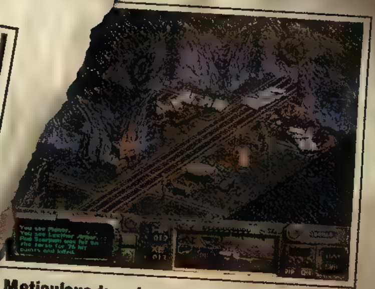

Meticulous turn-based combat system lets you target specific body parts to wound, cripple, or kill as you see fit.

Over 50 mini-quests with multiple solutions take you through devastated wastelands such as Rad Scorpion dens, Junktown, and the Brotherhood of Steel.

Victims don't just perish they get cut in half, melt into a pile of goo, and explode like a blood sausage into chunks of flesh.

Fallout

A POST NUCLEAR ROLE PLAYING GAME

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Product Information Number 184

It's a 3D World

T. Liam McDonald

Okay, I admit I was pretty slow to get on the 3D card bandwagon. I kept using my hopeless little Mach 64 Rage much longer than I should have, thinking, "It's *sorta* 3D, if ya squint." But that was based on *principle*, dammit! My Shadow Op, Colin Williamson, would call up and say, "Mygodthisissooocoolwith3Dfxsupport!"

"Oh, you young'uns." I'd say patronizingly. "Games are more'n pretty pitchers, y'know. All you kids care about is frame-rates and 'light sourcing.' Why, when I was your age, all we had were *text parsers*. We played *spreadsheets*, dammit, and we liked it. We played *Gary Grigsby* games, which had interfaces designed by planarian worms, or some similar lower life form."

These speeches became dangerous, since, of course, Colin would fall into a catatonic state and smack his head on his monitor. Finally, Diamond relented to my continued pestering and sent along a Monster 3D. It installed in about five minutes, and the first thing I popped in was *EF2000 V2.0*.

The clouds parted, the sun shone down, and I was converted. Thankye, Lord!

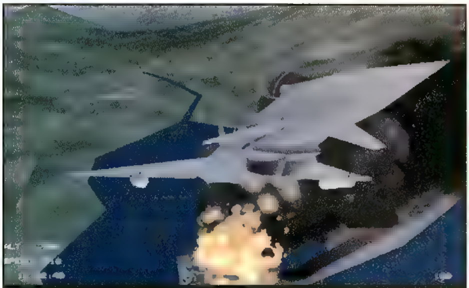
EF2000 V2.0 is, obviously, Version 2 of the popular, though initially flawed, *EF2000*, produced by the British programmers at DID. In the two years since its release, much has been done to improve this remarkable game, but nothing struck me so forcefully as the sight of those rolling, snow-capped mountains slipping by beneath my wing in all their high-res, full-color glory. No sim has ever looked this good.

The 3D support addresses cards based on the Rendition and 3Dfx chips, and was originally released as the Graphics+ pack. It provides the most realistic look of any simulation to date, and it's only possible because it's passing those graphics tasks off to the 3D card. The scrolling cockpit, which was often blurry and jerky in the original, moves fluidly now. External views and explosion graphics are outstanding. From the reflections on the canopy to the vapor trails and fogging effects, it is a stunning production. The 3D card support only works in DOS mode, but native Windows 95 support has been added for V2.0 as well.

This reissue of *EF2K* features much more than graphics embellishments, however. Most of the problems from the original have been fixed, from faulty damage assessment to poor AI. The game crashes less (but it still crashes sometimes). The most substantial change, however, comes in the highly expanded tactical mission planning mode. The campaign in the original was already a highly dynamic system which created new missions on a constantly updated battlefield. Version 2.0 adds a remarkable missions editor, which gives you complete control over every element of the air war. You can designate mission types and individual targets, set the composition and loadout of the strike force, and control waypoints and even altitude. A 3D image shows each target in an area, from buildings to units.

A quick custom dogfight builder has been included. Modem and serial connections are added. Friendly and enemy AI is better. Weapons and aircraft performance envelopes have been completely overhauled. Other changes abound. It all combines to place *EF2000 V2.0* squarely at the forefront of modern computer flight simulation.

Tom tries out EF2000 2.0 and finds it good — then makes a headlong leap onto the growing 3D accelerator bandwagon

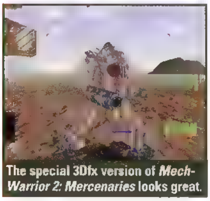


Version 2.0 of *EF2000* adds support for 3D cards based on the 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics and Rendition Verité chips, once again making it the prettiest sim going.

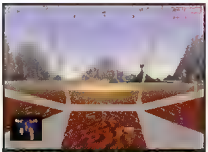
More 3D

More publishers are either rushing 3Dfx patches onto old games or putting them into entirely new packages. One example of new packaging to highlight 3D effects is Activision's *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries 3Dfx Interactive Edition*. The *MechWarrior* games have always aggressively supported the latest technology, from early 3D cards and VR headsets right up to the newest generation. Like the 3Dfx version of the original *MechWarrior 2*, *Mercenaries* is an impressive showcase for 3D effects.

Mercs features all the effects you'd expect from a 3Dfx version. The frame rate is smooth, with distance ren-



The special 3Dfx version of *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* looks great.



The 3Dfx version of *Mercs* features some gorgeous lighting effects.

dering handled admirably and very little terrain pop-up. Ground textures are elaborate and add substantially to the realism of the world. Full 16-bit color, moving clouds, and dynamic lighting effects are all quite nicely done. I noticed, however, a high amount of clipping when Mechs get in close to buildings; I can see infrastructure and walls that I shouldn't see. Some walls just disappear altogether. This is a nuisance, but of course it didn't keep people from playing *Tomb Raider*.

Downloadable patches for several other games add some impressive visual treats. The interim 3Dfx patch for *Flying Corps* solves most of that game's frame-rate problems and makes the Windows 95 mode tenable. It also creates some stunning vistas, second only to *EF2000 V2.0* for realism. When the full, enhanced edition of *Flying Corps*, with network play as well, hits shelves, it will be one to have.

The 3D patch for *Carmageddon* is still wildly unstable, crashing about every five minutes. It adds some nice fog effects, smooths out the frame-rate, and brings the high-res mode at least somewhat into the realm of the playable, but it needs work. I understand that 3D Realms is busy building 3D card support into its old titles, so we can look forward to *Duke* and *Shadow Warrior* with facelifts. *Redneck Rampage* could sorely use 3D support for its chunk-o-rama hi-res mode, and *Blood* would look swell with some new visual effects. The 3D card boom is turning into quite a payday for the publishers, who can reissue their old games with new effects as entirely new packages for a modest development outlay. Ka-ching!

On the Horizon

Holiday time is add-on time. Here are a few of the titles in the hopper. Most should be ready as you read this.

- *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter: Balance of Power*: A set of single and multi-player missions for *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, with two story-driven campaigns (one Rebel, one Empire). 3D support will be included, as well as the Rebels' B-Wing.

- *Magic: The Gathering*: MicroProse plans a slew of expansions, including products and services. *Spells of the Ancients* includes 130 new cards, a sealed deck generator, 60 pre-built decks, interface changes, and other gewgaws. *Manalink* is the multi-player module that adds Internet play and will be free on the Internet. *Gatheringnet* (*www.gathering.net*) is the official *Magic: The Gathering* online-play web site. Finally, *Duels of the Planeswalkers* is a retail offering that adds all the new multi-player features plus 50 new cards from *Legends* and *The Dark*.

- *Hellfire for Diablo*: Sierra is publishing this authorized *Diablo* expansion, which includes a new character class (The Monk), eight new levels, 20 monsters, 30 magic items, five spells, and so on. Looks like a good one.

- *Command & Conquer Assault Pack*: This is what *Command and Conquer Gold* should have been: *C&C Gold* plus the *Covert Operations* missions disc. Talk about milking the consumer....

PCG

BUG PATCHES*

Betrayal in Antara v.1.1 (Sierra): Primarily for users who are having problems loading chapters. *antar110.zip*

Birthright (Sierra): Mistakes in some spells have been fixed. The death of a regent no longer ends the game. Various multi-player features (synch, chat, wait cursor, and so on) are being fixed. Vassal troops visiting your provinces no longer cause those provinces to be treated as occupied. The Chalice of the Dead no longer summons infinite skeletons if used before any other domain action. Many other bugs, memory management, graphics, and gameplay issues have also been addressed. *brwinp2.zip (for Win95) and brdospt2.zip (for DOS)*

Command & Conquer: Red Alert and Counterstrike Upgrade (Westwood): Provides greater compatibility across Local Area Networks and modem connections. Players can no longer ally with the computer, better random starting points, multi-player save games, and the ability to slow down unit build rates in Internet play. *ra108usp.zip*

Creatures 1.02 (Cyberlife): Adds NT 4.0 compatibility. Creature Export/Import issues have been resolved. Exporting of pregnant Norns is now allowed, birth certificate parent names should now be more reliable, and rapid export/import sequences no longer cause problems. Increases the maximum number of expansion objects to allow for new expansion. Various interface and graphics improvements. *creatry2.zip*

Fire Fight 1.2 (EA/Epic): Adds Windows NT support and fixes some minor bugs. *ff12up.zip*

Front Page Sports: Golf '98 1.05 (Sierra): Issues with multi-player, golfer appearance/performance, statistics, and scoring have been addressed. *golfpt15.zip*

Heroes of Might and Magic II v.1.2 (New World Computing): Evens out some glitches in combat wherein the computer didn't have to fight enemies the human player had to fight. The CD audio music error as been fixed and music generally cleaned up. TCP/IP connections are better. *h2dos12.zip (for DOS) and h2w9512.zip (for Win95)*

iF-22 Patch 1 (Interactive Magic): Concentrates on increased frame rates and decreased hard drive access pauses. Also: a more-realistic Radar Cross Section, fixed "Request Steers to Home" communication, correct evaluation of escort missions, aborting missions no longer generates a successful result, AI planes explode when they collide with the ground, cannon fire is now oriented correctly with the nose of the plane, the "white-out" effect has been improved, digital joystick is improved, wingmen don't overtalk each other, and other fixes. *if22_p1.zip*

Kill Krush 'N Destroy 1.2 (EA): Improved multi-player messaging features, group recall centering, and improved video card support. *kkndv1_2.zip*

Links LS 98 v.1.3 (Access): Support for 1800x1440 resolution added. Meters/yards can be set in the Game Settings Dialog. Some minor crash, multi-player, and stat bugs fixed. *lnk98_13.zip*

Lords of the Realm II Siege Pack (Sierra): Allows two players to play with one disc and resolves video palette and multi-player problems. *l2gpt23.zip*

Quake Mission Pack 2 OpenGL (Activision): Adds enhanced OpenGL 3D card features from *GLQuake* to the mission pack. *roguegl.zip*

Stars! 2.70f (Empire): Fixes bug in which ships were not removed from production queues when their design was deleted. All progress on other starbases in the production queue is undone when the current starbase goes away. Mineral packets flung by Packet Physics races are no longer reduced to 1/3 damage. Failed cargo transfers to other players no longer halt turn generation. Non Alternate Reality remote miners no longer use the homeworld mineral concentration floor value. Remote mining is now limited to the equivalent of 4,000 mines per fleet. Fixed problem where editing the Chicken battle plan created a duplicate plan and ate the Sniper plan. Can no longer give a player ships if they already have 512 fleets. Improved initial spacing of players for three-way battles. Players can't steal from other players using remote miners any more. Enemies can no longer transfer cargo to your fleets. Many other rules and stability changes. *st27b27f.zip*

Tomb Raider for S3 Virge (Eidos): Adds support for S3 Virge graphics chipsets. *s3tomb.zip*

WarCraft II v.1.4 (Blizzard): Fixes exorcism bug, adds color randomization for multi-player games, and includes improved anti-cheating security. *war2_140.zip*

WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal v.1.5 (Blizzard): Fixes compatibility issues with old saved games, adds Draenor tileset and new Heroes to the Map Editor, and prevents cheating in multi-player games. *w2xptch.zip*

Wipeout XL Network v.0.9 Beta Patch (Psygnosis): Allows multi-player for TCP/IP, IPX, direct, and modem. *woxlnetb.zip*

ZPC Patch (GT Interactive): Fixes joystick/mouse sensitivity. *zpc.zip*

*YOU'LL FIND ALL OF THESE PATCHES ON *THE CD*!

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WHAT THE INTERNET

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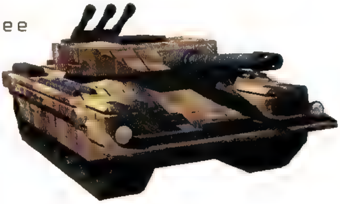
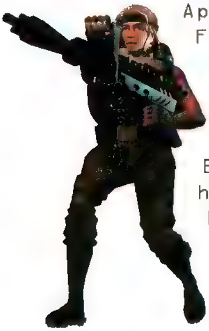


One minute you're torching a humvee driver from San Francisco, the next you're gunning down a jet-packed flame-thrower from Muskogee, next you're bombing an Apache tail-gunner from Fort Worth.



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Product Information Number 171

Kids at the Keys

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Elsewhere in this issue of *PC Gamer*, you'll find bold talk of holiday gift suggestions — entertaining diversions to make your children whoop with glee. Here, however, you'll find humble words on a gift you dare not wrap.

Look beyond the December fervor, think beyond the games, and consider the lowly typing package. It's an important item in any software library, because kids *will* need to type. The sooner they learn, the sooner the skill will become natural. As typing becomes instinctive, children will be able to focus more on the creative process of writing.

There are plenty of typing packages on the market, but none is perfect; they're universally flawed in a few particular ways: In the first place, none of these packages spends much time teaching kids the keyboard, so the children learn by stumbling through the drills and failing. In all of these programs, a diagram of the correct fingering is available, but kids have to look away from the target text to check the diagram, then, check their fingering on the keyboard. By that time, the drill may be over. Because they must beat the clock in the drills, children are exposed to even more opportunities for failure. They almost never finish a drill because the program will continue to scroll text across the screen until the time runs out.

These programs would all be improved by more child-directed qualities. Let the kids begin by experimenting with the letters in the lesson and force the program to respond to their key presses, *then* present the drills. Let children take as much time as they need to complete the drills, and measure their performance according to the time they used. That way, they get all the practice they need regardless of how long it takes.

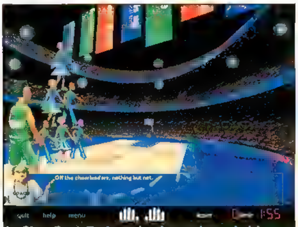
Despite the flaws, typing programs offer a lot of high points. Choose one of these programs for your kids so they can get the dull part of typing out of the way and start using their new skill on exciting new projects. They won't whoop with glee, but they may write you a thank-you note.

Slam Dunk Typing

Creative Wonders' basketball-based typing program features the most interesting drills in the league. In the seven exercises, fast fingers earn spectacular plays. In the Slam Dunk Drill, for example, the digital NBA player performs dazzling stuffs depending on how fast children type target words. Fast typing wins a flying leap at the basket, faster typing summons up a backwards slam, and the fastest typing nets a front flip. In the Horse Drill, for another example, swift fingers follow complex trick shots that ricochet off people and props. With speedy digits, kids can also direct a four-on-four duel in Game Time or type news dispatches in Sports Reporter.

The visual effects offer fine motivation and some positive feedback Unfortunately, though, the program's negative feedback is quite harsh, so rookie typists suffer rough criticism for their efforts. In the Slam Dunk Drill, for example, the crowd actually laughs at missed shots; and, in the Horse Drill, the coach says *You blew it!* when kids miss. Unfortunately, too, the program's innovative drills sometimes heap video-game complexity on top of the typing challenge, making success even more elusive for some children and offering little educational advantage to justify the tactic.

These days, being able to type is more important than ever, and four new typing programs can help kids learn early.



In *Slam Dunk Typing*, a hard-nosed coach drives new typists through a series of innovative keyboard exercises, such as the Horse Drill.

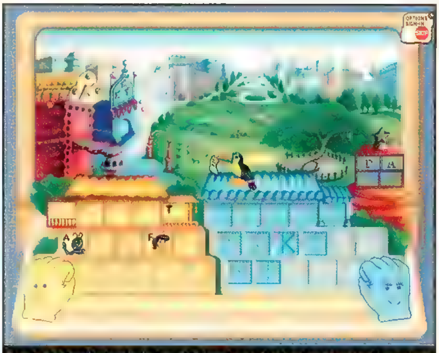
Creative Wonders has struck a trade in this program — spectacular atmosphere for traditional education. For basketball-crazed kids, the trade is worthwhile. The program wraps every potentially boring drill in exciting action. The cheering crowd adds aural encouragement; the demanding coach adds verbal motivation; and the drills are enough fun to engage anyone whose heart skips at the sound of a buzzer. This program may speak to the soul of some kids who would, otherwise, rather fold laundry than learn to type.

If your child fits the *Slam Dunk* profile, this is the typing program to choose. I suggest you spend a little time introducing the keyboard, but otherwise, the program will do all the dirty work and the towel boys will scurry in and clean up the mess. When the season's over, your child will probably be able to slam dunk that semicolon like a pro.

Typing Tutor 7

In Davidson's venerable program, kids tap their way through very traditional

Davidson adds some spice to *Typing Tutor 7*'s repertoire of traditional drills by including such entertaining games as Letter Invaders.



A pair of friendly hands helps children learn the keyboard as well as other language skills in *Read, Write & Type.*

drills, starting with the gibberish combinations of the home-key letters and ending with passages from classic novels, business letters, and comedy bits. Once proficient, kids can also take dictation, a drill not offered in the other typing programs.

For a lighter touch, Davidson includes a trio of games in the program. I found Word Search dull and hard on the eyes; and I found Whack 'Em unnecessarily violent. (Couldn't players throw darts at balloons or baseballs at milk bottles? Did we have to target creatures that wince and grunt when they're hit?)

On the other hand, I found Letter Invaders delightfully challenging. Based on the old Missile Command paradigm, Letter Invaders challenges kids to hit incoming alien fire by typing words as quickly as possible. These games inject a nice change of pace to the streaming text drills, but they would be even more potent if they were offered as rewards for completing exercises.

Unlike *Slam Dunk Typing*, *Typing Tutor 7* never scolds or humiliates kids, and this is one of the program's many strengths. The drills, though a little academic for most kids' tastes, are straightforward, practical exercises that will serve children well as they practice their finger-tip waltzes across the keyboard. The content of the drill passages are often interesting or useful: one had me tackling a letter to Steven Spielberg regarding the questionable origin of the *Jurassic Park* plot. I am determined to increase my 70 wpm typing speed enough to get to the end of the missive. When the content of the drill motivates the student to do better, the tutorial is efficient indeed.

Read, Write & Type!

Slam Dunk Typing and *Typing Tutor 7* are for older kids, around fourth grade and older. For the younger set, The Learning Company offers *Read, Write & Type!*, a very different approach to typing. Designed for kids 6 to 8 years old, the program teaches language skills through typing, giving the program a depth that the other two packages simply can't reach.

Beginning with a long introductory sequence, the program is hosted by a pair of hands. This enthusiastic duo explains that a vicious virus is hiding all the sounds from the keyboard. Without the sounds, no stories can be written, so children must rescue the hidden letters and restore the narrative process. As kids complete each drill, they defeat the evil virus, earning more sounds for their keyboards.

The hands always refer to letters by the sounds they make as opposed to their names, thereby teaching phonics skills along with typing. By typing phonetically, kids learn how sounds combine to make words. Later, when they've rescued the sounds, kids watch how scenes combine to make stories. There's a whole-language dimension to this program that empowers kids to start writing early.

Read, Write & Type! moves so slowly and amiably that it feels more kid-directed than the other two programs. However, the plot is extremely contrived, the villain unbearably capricious, and the good guys overwhelmingly agreeable. The overall effect may be too sweet and loose for kids at the older end of the age range. For young kids or kids with thinner skin than average, this program offers a friendly approach packed with opportunities for success.

Mario Teaches Typing 2

For pure engagement, there's Brainstorm's entry in the typing program arena. It doesn't offer much to set it above the rest, but the Mario Brothers are a popular motif, and some kids may respond as rabidly to the little plumbers as others respond to *Slam Dunk*'s NBA drills

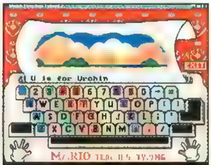
The drills scroll by horizontally, and a character moves through a series of obstacles and prize gauntlets as the child types. This is supposed to feel like a videogame, but the typing has little relationship with the action. Everything moves along just to show that the child is typing.

The program's plot is a lot like the plot in *Read, Write & Type!*: The Mario Brothers need help realizing a typing-oriented quest. The plot is as thinly constructed as *Read, Write & Type!*'s story, and far less interactive.

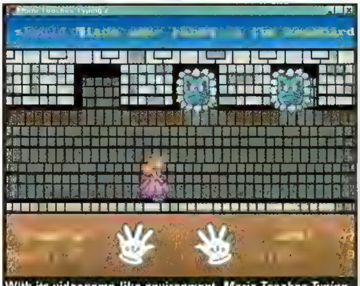
Like the other programs, *Mario Teaches Typing 2* spends little effort on teaching the keyboard. However, the early drills are so simple that children will probably find more success under Mario's tutelage than under the hard gaze of *Slam Dunk*'s coach or the impersonal care of *Typing Tutor 7*.

My biggest beef with *Mario Teaches Typing 2* is its setting. Mario is unpleasant, especially as a disembodied head floating in the sky. His graphics are blocky, his gameplay is dull, his music is annoying, and his accent sounds like an old, bad joke.

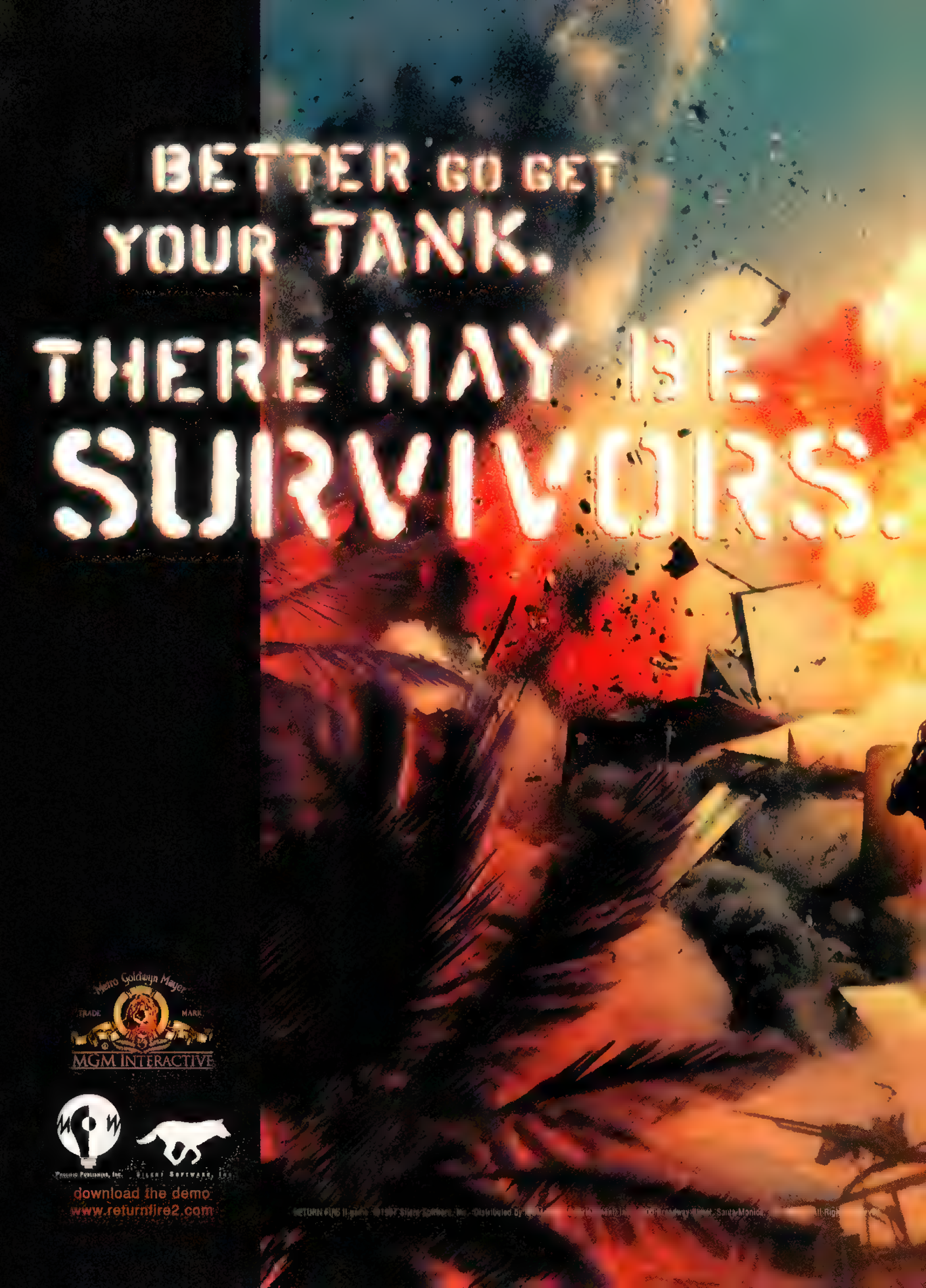
My distaste for *Mario Teaches Typing 2* says more about the market as a whole than it does about this particular program. One typing package is in most ways pretty much like another — they're all just a collection of drills and progress charts. What sets one apart from another is the environment. Will the feel of the program engage your child with satisfying, motivating exercises? Or will your kids beg to sort laundry rather than start up that program one more time? For some kids, the disembodied Mario head will mean the difference between a clattering keyboard and a dresser full of folded clothes. For others, *Slam Dunk Typing* will be the only way to score points.



In *Mario Teaches Typing 2*, kids can explore an onscreen keyboard, familiarizing themselves with key location and fingering.



With its videogame-like environment, *Mario Teaches Typing 2* engages kids in speed drills and other lessons.


BETTER GO GET
YOUR TANK.
THERE MAY BE
SURVIVORS.
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of the Year.
And it's got
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Use your head.
Don't leave any-
thing standing.
And don't take
anyone alive.
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Product Information Number 237

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This box makes it easy for your loved ones to take advantage of the fastest internet gameplay against live competition on the HEAT.NET internet game network--more importantly, it is the bus on the road to world peace! CyberDiversion Theory says, if we divert humankind's primal aggressive urges away from reality and onto the internet, we can end real-life violence and create a lasting world peace!! CYBERBULLETS CAUSE NO PAIN!!

CONTENTS OF BOX--

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2) six months' premium membership (allows him/her to compete in tournaments/special events and earn frequent player points (Degrees) that can be redeemed for games and merchandise in HEAT.NET's blackmarket store, plus gain access to the latest, hottest games before anyone else.)

3) Internet access from MCI

4) four multi-player games only on HEAT: DeathDrome,™ Scud: Industrial Evolution,™ Net Fighter,™ and our new exclusive HEAT Quake.Mod™

5) HEAT T-shirt (he/she can show his/her solidarity with the Movement!)

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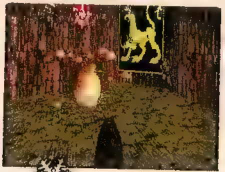
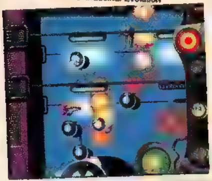
A gift like world peace is one he/she will never forget!
PEACE ON EARTH AND BAD WILL ON THE NET!!!

HEAT IS THE ANSWER!

Net Fighter


HEAT Quake Mod


Scud: Industrial Evolution

DeathDrome

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Product Information Number 303

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Wireplay
The games network

The Rise of Cyber Sports

You can find fame and fortune playing computer games!

No, that's not some pitch from an E-mail spam scheme; it's just the latest unexpected twist in the ever-changing world of computer games. In the last few issues of *PC Gamer*'s news section, I've interviewed no less than three individuals with no greater claim to fame than the fact that they achieved something noteworthy in the realm of online gaming.

These interviewees were Dennis "Thresh" Fong, the world's *Quake* champ; Kornelia Takacs, a class act and the top female *Quake*-er; and the mysterious *Ultima Online* player known only as "Rainz," who killed Lord British and was banned from the game (at least for a day), carving out a bloody name for himself in the realm of online roleplaying games.

Now this interviewing of gamers was not some whim of mine. It was a recognition of a growing trend, one of the first, unforeseen consequences of the rapid growth of online gaming: by being really good at computer games, you can make some good money — or at least earn a moment in the sun. Players, not developers, are becoming the stars.

Today, only a tiny fraction of online gamers — the best players of today's most popular games — are making money or winning major prizes. Thresh has his Ferrari, of course (won from none other than *Quake* programmer John Carmack), but other players are also scoring new computers and cash prizes — although, admittedly, all "Rainz" earned for his trouble was the wrath of the Origin establishment.

There have certainly been *Doom* tournaments and *Quake* competitions and ladders before now, but it's only with the advent of the commercial gaming networks that we've begun to see truly massive tournaments involving hundreds of competitors. With their preliminary rounds being played out on the Internet and the final rounds becoming major spectacles at trade shows or LAN arcades, these tournaments seem to be getting bigger and more noteworthy every year. (The conclusion of the "Red Annihilation" *Quake* tournament at last year's E3 was certainly one of the highlights of the show).

Now the Total Entertainment Network has set up something it calls the Professional Gamers' League, or PGL. The PGL is, fundamentally, not that different from existing Internet ranking systems — Case's Internet Ladder, the *Quake* clan standings pages, etc. There's just one major difference: money, and lots of it. Something like $250,000 worth of cash and prizes for the winners in the first three months.

Jason Bates

So TEN's directors have had the foresight to set up the rudimentary forerunner of an online gaming equivalent of the NFL. More power to them. Certainly they'll bring to the table certain qualities like impartial judging, a publicity machine, and (most importantly) the wherewithal to draw in sponsors and prize money. They have a scheme by which companies like AMD are tossing around cash as prize money to the winners of these tournaments.

For this particular league, you do have to be a TEN member. Now, it's not my job to sell TEN subscriptions, but I'm also not going to fault TEN for capitalizing on the competitiveness of Internet gamers. TEN is a business, and that business is online gaming, and by throwing in the cash and making one of the first attempts at legitimizing computer gaming as a sport, I think TEN is only helping online gaming in the long run, making it into something that could gain national recognition.

Just as important as the players, though, are the spectators. You have to be able to *show* people the games to get them excited. For a while, tourney-makers like TEN might have to fiddle around with inadequate low-bandwidth broadcasts like RealVideo. But cable television has plenty of bandwidth right now....

> Players are becoming the stars as computer gamers get online and compete for prizes — and get a chance to make a living playing computer games.

All-computer cable channels are popping up, and they may be desperate enough for programming as to run live coverage of *Quake* tourneys. Why not? It would be a great thing to watch. Skill at a computer game is as much as a sport and worthy of national recognition as anything else on television. It would certainly be more entertaining than most current computer TV show fare, where someone stands in front of the camera and demos the latest sleepy software gizmo.

TEN hopes a network like ESPN2 might be interested in picking up the *Quake* competitions. ESPN2 recently agreed to broadcast the world championships of *Magic: The Gathering* (the original card game, not the computer versions). Certainly watching a *Quake* frag fest on TV would have a lot more visual punch than watching people play a card game (and I'm not knocking Magic again, but I can't imagine how you'd cover a card game on TV — how many poker and bridge shows are there?).

And as interactive television grows, so do the possibilities. For example, while watching a *Quake/Trinity/*whatever fragfest, you should be able to jump from player to player or toggle quickly between the chase camera and first-person views with a remote control.

So this trend is great for TEN, great for Thresh, great for the industry, and great for the gamers getting ready today to become the Dallas Cowboys of tomorrow. The only obstacle lies in these stupid copper wires the phone monopoly laid out in the 1920s. Give us broadband, two-way digital television, and look out — maybe in a few years we'll have Monday Night *Trinity*!

PCG

Small Console-ation

Okay, I'll admit it was rather daunting at first. I wandered upstairs to our sister publication, *PlayStation Magazine*, with trepidation. I've never really done what I was about to do before, so I fully expected to be laughed right out of there. But I wanted to do it, I *needed* to do it, and I was *going* to do it. I cleared my throat, and asked, "Hey, guys? Is there a free PlayStation I can use?"

They looked at me. Blankly. Then one of them pointed to a small color TV set with a box on the shelf underneath it and said, "There's that one, but I don't think it's connected."

Lucky for me — it was already set up. I put a CD-ROM into the machine, turned on the computer, and pressed the power button. Nothing happened.

"What's going on, guys?"

One of the others pulled himself away from *Bushido Blade* to help me out.

"The switches were set wrong," he said. He fiddled with a variety of controls and changed some channels, and after a process that looked more complicated than programming a VCR (or installing a 3D card), I finally saw the title screen I was looking for. I pressed the Start button, and away I went on a journey into *Final Fantasy VII*.

Now, don't get the wrong idea. I've played plenty of console RPGs, from *Dragon Warrior* on my old Nintendo Entertainment System (which I bought for *Metroid*) to *Final Fantasy Legends* on my Gameboy (which I bought for *Metroid 2*) to *Final Fantasy III* on my Super Nintendo (which I bought for *Super Metroid*). But I haven't yet bought a PlayStation (there's no PlayStation *Metroid*), so using one amidst the professionals at *PSM* was a bit...intimidating.

Once *FF7* started, though, I didn't really care. Okay, we're *PC Gamer*. We don't review PlayStation products. But considering SquareSoft's new RPG was one of the biggest RPG releases of the year on *any* platform, I figured I should check it out. And I can say, as a PC RPG fanatic, it's impressive. In fact, it's *beautiful*, with some of the smoothest transitions from gameplay to pre-rendered cinematic scenes I've ever seen. Granted, it's about as linear as watching the latest episode of "ER," but it's still fun.

I was blissfully exploring the story, battling creatures, and marveling at the dazzling special effects when disaster struck. I reached the first save point (why do console designers insist on having save *points*, rather than just letting gamers save whenever they want?), and the game prompted me for my memory card. I pulled out the one I'd borrowed for this very purpose, and put it in. Nothing happened. So I had to pester the console experts. "Why can't I save?" I asked.

Michael Wolf

"What's the problem?"

"It says there's no memory card inserted, but it's right there."

"Oh. *Final Fantasy VII* doesn't work with third-party memory cards. You have to use a Sony memory card."

Sheesh.

"Do you have one?"

"Nope."

So much for the adventure. Who said the console systems were easier to use than PCs? Anyway, when and if it finally gets to the PC (there's still been no official announcement, but rumors have it hitting the market around Spring of 1998), we can hope it'll have 3D acceleration, more gorgeously rendered backgrounds, and the ability to save the game anywhere you darn well please — which could make it one of the best RPGs to hit your CD-ROM drive. Now, if I can just get one of the console guys to part with a Sony memory card, I might be spending quite a bit more time upstairs....

Even PC gaming fanatics have to face the dreaded console system every now and then — if only to check out what they hope will soon be a PC title.

A Teaser

Most fans of space adventures eventually end up getting their fixes in the same place: the Star Control universe. The first Star Control title was a strategy game with some action/arcade elements; the second added a story and adventure elements. The third expanded the adventure portion and tried to bring in bits of strategy, but it still had that action/arcade element. Now Accolade is hard at work on *Star Control 4* and allowed me to take a peek behind the scenes and speak with some of the developers. You're not going to believe what I saw and heard.

First of all, where the action element of the previous games was a secondary feature, it'll be the primary focus of the fourth game. You'll fly through the galaxy in a real-time 3D view from behind your ship. The entire game progresses from this angle, although the camera might shift to focus on a new fighter under your control. The story elements will be told via picture-in-picture overlays, so you're never out of the main view, and thus never switching from screen to screen. Everything happens in real time so you'll get updates on what's going on in the universe.

When I first heard about the action-oriented design, I was a little worried. What about the stories we've learned and loved from the previous games? I asked the designers about this, and Scot Amos, the Lead Designer on the project, said, "We're much more action-oriented than previous games, but we're also die-hard story guys. As a result, we're finding exciting ways to blend in story line throughout the game, as well as telling a satisfying story that continues the StarCon saga."

I saw a bit of the game engine in action, and I can tell you first hand that it looks fantastic. What I saw was a very rough, early build, but when I pulled the trigger, the guns opened up firing vents, the cannons recoiled after a blast, and the force-feedback joystick gave my hand a jolt. And yes, it'll support 3D acceleration.

I'll be visiting Accolade again soon, so be sure to look for more info on *Star Control 4* in the next issue. **PCG**

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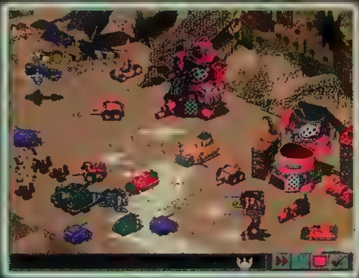

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Product Information Number 326

Arsenal is dead; long live Arsenal!

On July 14, 1997, Jim DeGoey posted a press release on Arsenal's web site: "Arsenal Publishing, Inc., is changing its name to Arsenal Interactive, Inc., to reflect its new focus as a computer game development company... changes in the way software is marketed and distributed overwhelmed the scale of our operation."

Since both the wording and the timing of Jim's announcement dovetailed nicely with the ongoing thread of several recent Desktop General columns, I decided to ask if he would be willing to expand on the topic of "industry-wide changes in the way entertainment software is marketed and distributed" as it pertains to wargames in general and the fate of Arsenal in particular.

First, some basic economic history as it applies to entertainment software:

Ten years ago, stores that handled PC games were either little Mom-n-Pop operations or big electronics retailers who reserved a corner for games. New games numbered 10-12 a month, at most, and once they were put on display, they stayed there until somebody bought them or interest in them never materialized.

This gave the better games a chance to "mature" in the marketplace. Magazine reviews came out 60-90 days after the product shipped, and word-of-mouth took some weeks to generate its kind of momentum. If the reviews were good and the "buzz" among PC gamers was enthusiastic, the games sold slowly but steadily. As long as retailers were still moving a few copies, the games stayed on the shelves.

"When we started Arsenal four years ago, there was still plenty of shelf space for games produced by the independent, small-scale companies," DeGoey says. "We were looking at the traditional 1980s business paradigm — we weren't going to get obscenely rich, but we expected we could make a decent profit publishing games that were labors of love."

But in 1996, software entertainment sales became a billion-dollar business, all but an insignificant amount of that money coming from huge national retail chains. The number of "SKUs" ("shelf-keeping units" in Suit-Speak; to you and me, it just means a game in a box) released last year topped 4,000. That's a 25 percent increase in the number of titles released in 1995, but the amount of shelf space went up by only *seven* percent.

William R. Trotter

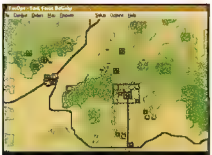
General Trotter brings dispatches from a man who's found out what a cold, cruel, world it really is out there in the Land of the Suits.

Eighty percent of those games were released by major publishers, and the top 25 sellers (you can name 'em as well as I can) generated 75 percent of that billion-dollar market.

"What it all means," DeGoey says, "is that the retail outlets want to fill their shelves with brand-name product from the big companies. They want series and sequels, and they want to stock games that will make big money in 30 days. That's why advertising budgets have become so insanely bloated, and that's what's driving independent companies out of business."

Believe it or not, wargaming accounted for almost $110 million in revenues last year (the trade press, however, has a very broad definition of "wargames," including all the *Command & Conquer* clones and air combat sims, as well as more traditional wargames). And Arsenal desperately needed a piece of that pie.

"A large part of the problem — and the reason why we never published another game after *TacOps* — is that we still had faith in the old-fashioned prima-donna independent developers," DeGoey says. "But some of them were living in the past. I'm sure *Road to Moscow* would've been a great game if the designers had had unlimited time to tinker with it, but the hard cold fact is that in today's market, it takes a minimum of a quarter-million dollars to develop a commercially viable product, which means a game that's gotta sell 35,000 copies or more."



Jim DeGoey says changes in the market made *TacOps* Arsenal's last product as a publisher.

Which is why, gentle readers, we'll see *Panzer General II*, but we're not going to see a game of the Spanish Civil War any time soon.

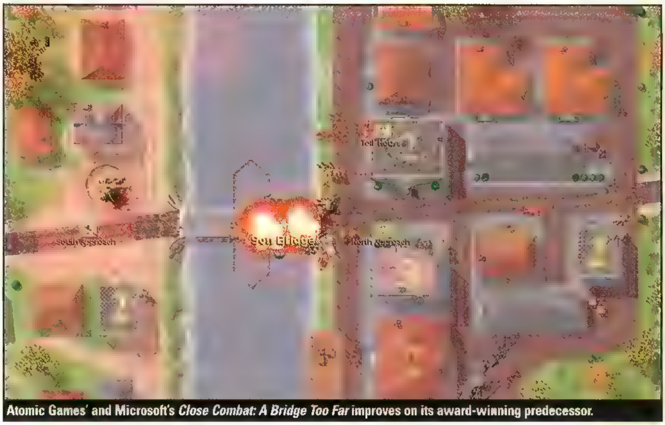
"God bless the independent holdouts like HPS and Incredible Simulations," DeGoey says, "but for a company like Arsenal — that wanted to be somewhere comfortably in between SSI and HPS — we fell between two eras in our industry. So now we're a developer and not a publisher, because there simply is no way a medium-sized wargame company can exist in today's marketplace. It's all hit-driven, it's all skewed toward the Suits and their Hollywood mentality, and the software chains are the equivalent of the multiplex cinemas."

While Arsenal was waiting (more than two years) for its second product (*Road to Moscow*, now being hawked around to any publisher who'll spare ten minutes for the sales pitch), DeGoey explored other marketing avenues.

"Mail order? Forget it. If you advertised in every magazine that wargamers like to read, you'd still not move enough games to cover the cost of the ads," he says.

Isn't it possible, I asked, that companies like Arsenal could become viable through Internet commerce, bypassing those monster retail outlets and their "if-it-doesn't-sell-in-30-days, yank-it-off-the-shelves" tactics?

"Direct online sales for products made by independent game publishers is a grand, old-fashioned, all-American free-enterprise idea," DeGoey says. "But the vast majority of consumers don't think like Internet fanatics do: they're still not comfortable with it, they still find it unfathomably complicated, and they still



Atomic Games' and Microsoft's *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* improves on its award-winning predecessor.

don't trust it, in the sense of typing their VISA card numbers on a screen. Out of all the millions and millions of people who own home computers, only about 15 percent of them regularly access the Web.

"When that figure hits 50 percent, online game selling becomes a viable proposition, but who knows how many years it'll take?"

It's been a rough four years for Arsenal: the big, anticipated sales of *TacOps* to the Marine Corps never happened, and the development debacle for *Road to Moscow* (full-page color ads in *PCG* and *Computer Gaming World*, numerous bullish previews — including one by this columnist — and then...no game to back it up) all but destroyed the company's credibility.

But DeGoey is happy and optimistic about Arsenal's new identity and new direction. *Weapons Free*, a visually striking game of modern naval combat, looks to have found a publisher; Arsenal has inked contracts with some of the most trusted wargame designers in the genre, and the Australian Army has just bought a warehouse full of *TacOps* for use in training.

And if nothing else, the company's ordeal has taught DeGoey a lot about how to operate in the reality of today's software industry — as cold-eyed and brutal as it may sometimes be — compared to those long-gone days when a wargame was a labor of love and not just another SKU. For all his battle scars, he still thinks a good wargame can be both.

Clearing the Deck

Yes, there really *is* a desktop; it's an old dining table I've been using since 1970. Right now, it's so cluttered I can hardly find my coffee cup, so the time seems right to clear out some space for the inevitable tsunami of fourth-quarter games.

Never say Never

I only got a brief glimpse of *Sid Meier's Gettysburg!* at E3; the Firaxis booth was crowded and Meier was starving for one of those $7.00 BBQ sandwiches (meat unspecified) being sold at the convention center. I was intrigued, of course, because Meier does not create sub-standard games, but I was conditioned by many hours of playing Talonsoft's version, with its photo-realistic map and panoramic "tabletop" style. My first impression was that Meier's maps looked too cartoony, his decision to go real-time seemed questionable, and the game itself might well prove to be redundant.

Now that I've been to Firaxis HQ and actually spent several hours closely studying the game, my opinion has changed radically. The real-time scale seems utterly right for the "feel" of how the Civil War developed, the interface contains delectable user-options not found in any competing game, and the stylized landscape now seems quite handsome, and perfectly matched to the soldiers who maneuver on it. There is elegance and finesse here, and mind-reeling complexities behind a silky-smooth, utterly intuitive interface.

So sue me: I've been questioning whether wargamers *really* need another version of a battle that's been done to death since the days of the Commodore 64, and all I can say now is yes we do — when it's this fresh, this creative, and this much fun.

Great Battles

"Hannibal's at the gates!" cried the ancient Romans when the formidable Carthaginian whipped their best legions. I-Magic's *Great Battles of Hannibal* doesn't look different from *Great Battles of Alexander*, but the mood and ambiance is sufficiently different to make for an equally compelling wargame. Alexander, after all, did conquer the world; Hannibal, despite some stunning victories after his epic crossing of the Alps, didn't conquer Rome. And the Punic Wars, unlike Alexander's conquest-for-its-own sake campaigns, were a death-struggle between the two most powerful city-states in the ancient world.

Bottom line: don't be turned off because it's a quickie sequel based on a now-familiar engine. *Great Battles of Hannibal* has a flavor of its own and I don't think you'll feel like you're just getting more of the same.

Close Combat 2

I've been spending a lot of time with *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far*, and I thought I'd seen all the game had to show me until last Saturday Playing a campaign as the Germans, I intially recruited a young sniper named Schacht. His morale was high, but his experience minimal (one green bar; fresh out of training school). Over the course of four battles, he improved remarkably; I started becoming fond of him.

Then, while defending an all-out British attack on the Arnhem suburbs, his position was suddenly assaulted by a very aggressive team of "Red Devil" paratroopers, at very close range. Armed only with a bolt-action Gewehr-43, the poor lad had no chance. He killed one Brit with the last round in his magazine, then (in the finest traditions of the Waffen SS) he dropped his rifle and actually attacked them with his bayonet! He slew one more enemy soldier before being killed himself. On the zoomed-in level, you could see this is vivid detail. I was actually rather moved.

Now *that's* realism!

Another Cool Web Site

Thanks to a tip from veteran game-designer Steve Magestro, I recently learned about George Nafziger's "Orders of Battle" web site (*www.infinet.com/~Nafziger/obs.html*). Nafziger is a specialist in the Napoleonic era, but has branched out to create a truly astonishing reference source.

The Orders of Battle Collection covers every conflict from 1600 to 1945 and contains approximately *nine thousand* orders of battle, down to the regimental level. I cannot begin to conceive of the man-hours involved in this kind of research (the man has 125 OoB's for the Spanish Civil War alone). How deep does this mammoth database go? How about the Carlist War of 1843? Or the Prusso-Danish War of 1864?

Obviously, this web site is a labor of love, not a business venture. The price for this service is extremely reasonable: about fifty cents a page, depending on the size of the document. You can either download the OoBs or you can order them from the address listed on the home page. An invaluable source of information, for both historians and wargamers alike. **PCG**

Blasts from the Past

As I struggled to come up with an idea for this month's column, a bunch of old acquaintances arrived in the *PC Gamer* offices. They came in the guise of MicroProse's new *Conquer the Skies* four-in-one package, but sim fans already know their names: *Falcon 3.0, Gunship 2000, Fleet Defender*, and *1942: Pacific Air War*.

These were four of the best air combat sims from the early 1990s, and for me they inspire a lot of mixed emotions. I can clearly recall why I loved these games (well, most of them) when they were new; and yet today there's a part of me that can't believe I was ever impressed with them.

Fleet Defender, from 1994, was my favorite of this group. A simulation of the Navy's F-14 Tomcat, it was strictly about air-to-air combat, and it was one of the first air combat sims to attempt to model a complex fire control system in any detail; it let you use the AWG-9 radar to track six enemy planes simultaneously at 100-plus nautical miles and take 'em out with the Tomcat's long-range Phoenix missiles. It was also among the first to create a convincing feeling that you were playing a small but important role in a major operation. You could cycle through external views of a whole slew of planes going about their missions: the A-6s or F-18s you were escorting, the MiG-23s vectoring in to shoot them down; helicopters rescuing downed pilots; transport planes dropping paratroops; Hawkeye early-warning planes orbiting on station — even missiles fired by your strike planes. It was all pretty new and exciting. *Fleet Defender* pioneered a lot of features that are still rare in current air combat sims. It got good reviews, but I still think it's one of the most underrated sims in recent years, and I think it's time we had a new F-14 sim as deep as this one but with today's technology.

Fleet Defender was one of the first sims to put detailed texture maps on virtually every object in the game, planes, ships, terrain, etc. And yet, just three years after its release, it's looking pretty primitive. It's a perfect illustration of how fast things move in PC gaming. *Fleet Defender's* graphics blew me away in 1994, but they look awfully blocky next to today's high resolution, 3D accelerated visuals.

The most primitive graphics in the *Conquer the Skies* package belong to *Gunship 2000*, 1991's Apache attack helicopter simulation. There's not a texture map to be found in this game, and at 320x200 resolution, it looks shockingly low-tech. Still, it's got loads of gameplay and some features you can't find even in recent chopper sims, like the ability to fly three different types of helicopter and command as many as five choppers in coordinated missions. The upcoming *Longbow 2* is on track to be the first helo sim in six years to do all of that — which is why the developers have privately called it *Longbow 2000*.

Dan Bennett

1942: Pacific Air War, the most recent sim in the package, holds up best in visual terms; it's still running at low resolution, but everything's nicely texture-mapped and shaded. It's also the last major stand-alone World War Two fighter sim, although a few promising new ones should be out from other publishers before too long. *PAW* got very good notices and won some awards when it was released a few years ago, and while its cutting-edge graphics have dulled considerably, the gameplay is still there.

Falcon 3.0 is probably the best known of the games in the package — interestingly, it hasn't survived the test of time as well as the others. I have to admit that I've never understood why *Falcon 3.0* inspired such fanatical devotion in so many other sim nuts, but I was determined to give it another look. So I fiddled with my DOS mode configuration until I could free up the needed 602K of old-fashioned conventional memory, and I jumped back in.

***Fleet Defender's* graphics were as impressive in 1994 as its gameplay — but now they look chunky.**

The verdict: I still don't get it. I can admire the ambition, knowing it was the first sim to let you command a squadron of fighters, tasking multi-plane flights with multiple missions, but I just...can't ...get into it. Even after something like seven patches, *Falcon 3.0* feels clunky. And it's not just because it's six years old; *Falcon 3.0* isn't as much fun as some of its contemporaries, like *Gunship 2000* or *F-15 Strike Eagle III*. For me, *Falcon 3.0* will always be a simulation that attempted incredible things but failed in its most important task — being an entertaining *game*.

In the end, I can't recommend the *Conquer the Skies* pack without a lot of qualifications. If you're still using a moderately fast 486 (say 50MHz or so) and find you can't run any of the latest sims, this is a bargain at about $25. If you've got a fast Pentium, you'll want to download the MoSlo utility to temporarily slow your computer to 486 speed (MoSlo is all over the Internet, including at *www.pcgamer.com*). Be warned, though: the manuals for all four games exist in electronic form only; you'll have to study them onscreen or print 'em out.

If you're only interested in the *Conquer the Skies* package for nostalgia's sake, you'll probably find what I did: while a few of the games are very good in terms of gameplay, their age really shows. The past is an interesting place to visit, but ultimately I'm glad it's the past. It raises an interesting question, though: six years from now, will games like *Longbow 2* and *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter* look as primitive to us as these games do today? **PCG**

> MicroProse challenging air combat fans to conquer the skies with four classics — and they are good games, but they're showing their age.

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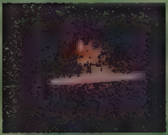

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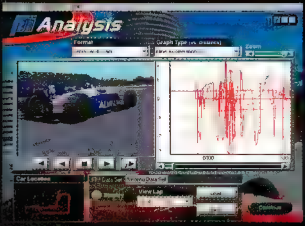
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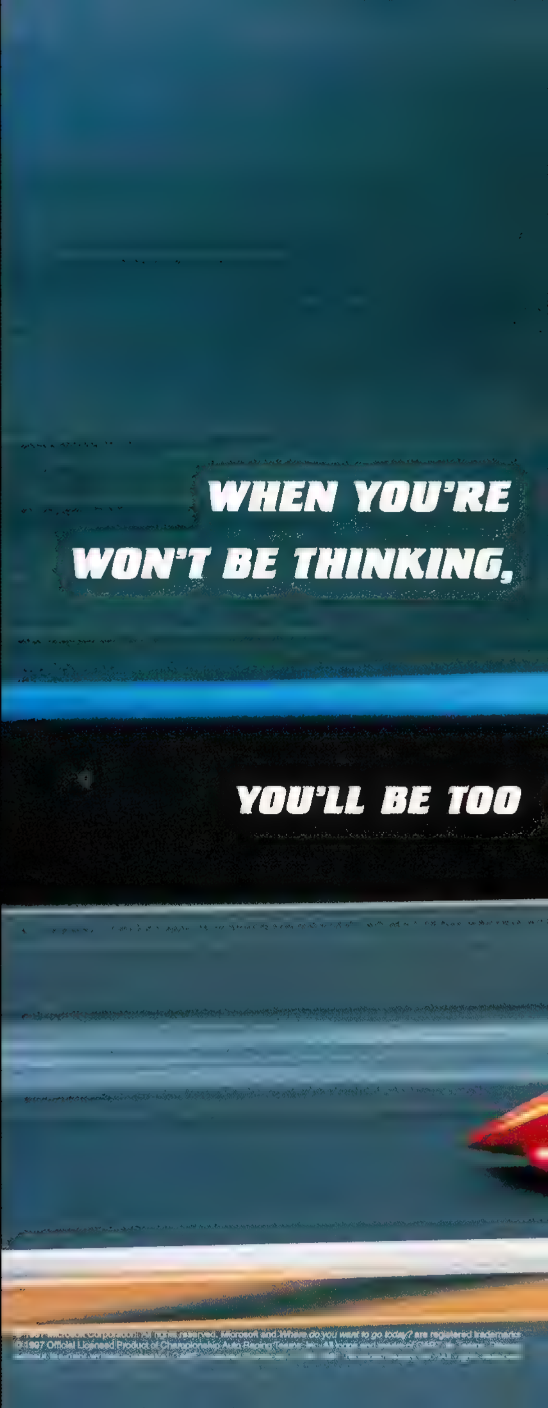
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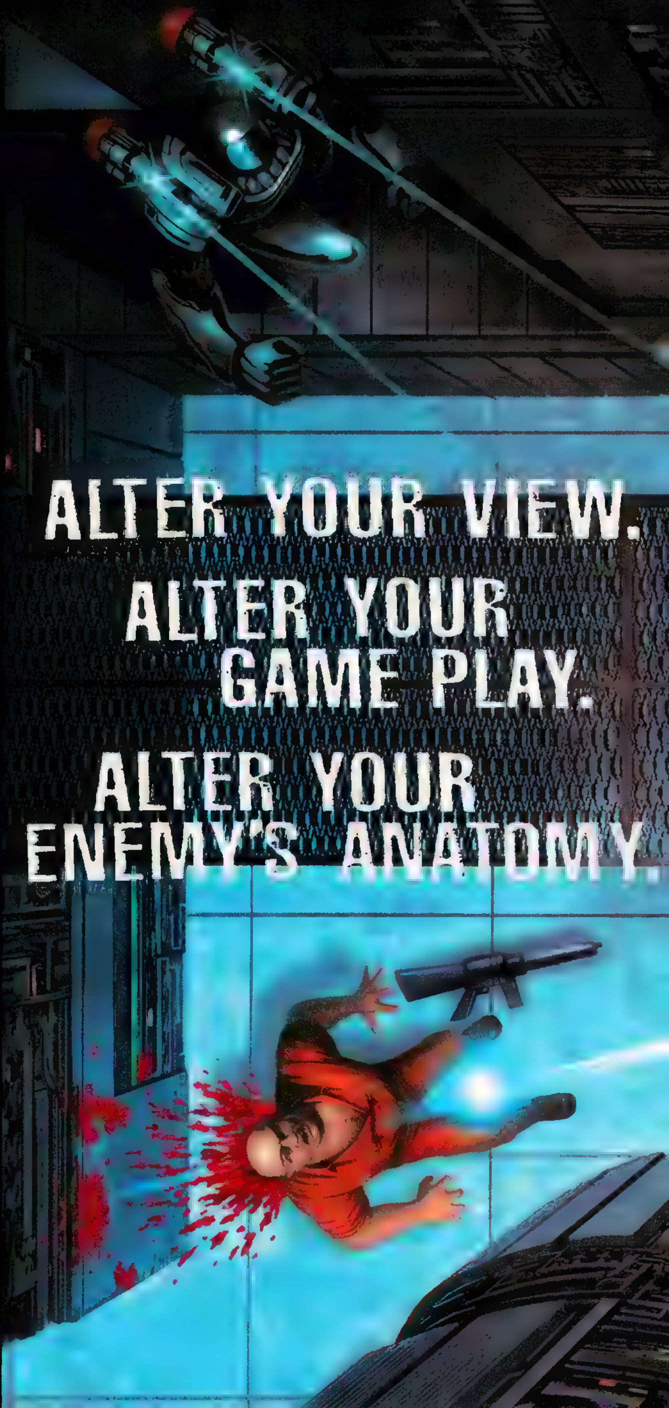
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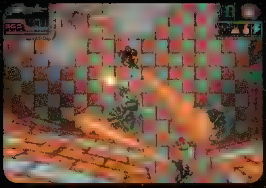

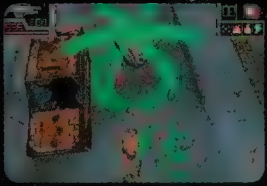

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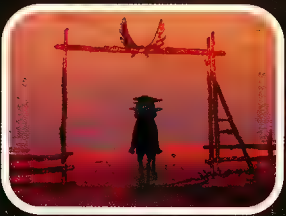
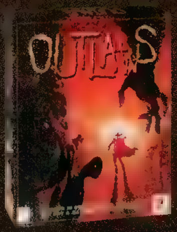


After you gun down the last outlaw, you'll ride off triumphantly into the sunset.

Product Information Number 224

MEANT LOADING QUICKLY AND SHOOTING STRAIGHT.



Get ready for the good, the bad, and the even worse. As Marshall James Anderson, you'll face a horde of ornery, gun-slinging outlaws. You'll shoot your way through a twisted plot of greed and revenge. You'll arm yourself with firearms, as well as your wits. You'll fight alone, or engage in multi-player gameplay over modem, LAN or Internet. So go ahead, and make your day.

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STRATEGY CENTRAL

SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

If you've gotten this far in the magazine, you must be thinking, "Geez, I've got to be near the end of all this gaming goodness!" Well, buddy, you'd be wrong, because we're just getting started. We've got strategy for *Hexen II*, *Resident Evil*, *The Space Bar*, *Age of Empires*, and more, so take a deep breath and dive back in!

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Hexen II, Part 1

Having trouble staying alive? We can help!

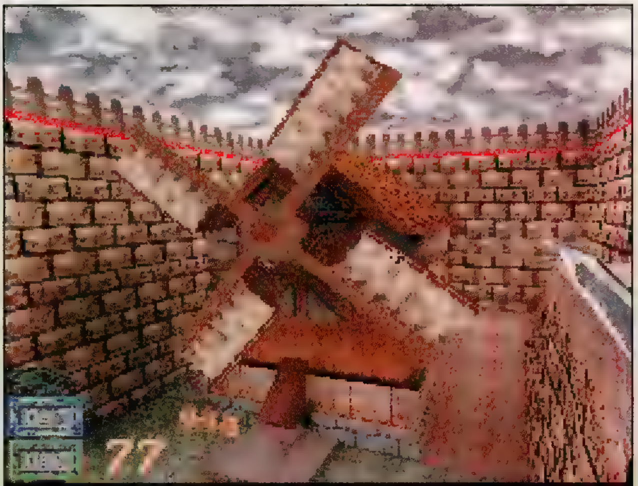
Here's the first part of our definitive guide to Activision's *Hexen II*. The second part will appear next month as part of our Ultimate Strategy Guide '98. Happy hunting!

BLACKMARSH

Blackmarsh is probably the easiest of the four hubs. The puzzles are mostly of the "find key, open door" variety with a couple of twists. It's important to keep in mind the end goal when playing through each hub. The goal in Blackmarsh is to defeat the Crystal Golem so you can enter Famine's Domain to destroy him. You are given the clue that the Brotherhood of Hunger knows how to destroy the Crystal Golem. However, there are a number of steps to be taken and items to be found before you can do this. Here's a list of all the items that must be acquired in order to successfully complete Blackmarsh.

THE BONES OF LORIC

Finding the Bones of Loric is your first objective. In Blackmarsh, there is a cavernous area with water and a bridge. Dive into the water and activate the button on the back wall. Go into the teleporter you just opened and follow the halls until you reach the Tomb of Loric. Collect the bones.



Take the Bones of Loric to the Mill for grinding. The bone dust will be outside the mill when you're done.

THE MILL KEY

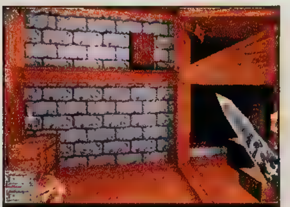
In Barbican, you will have to operate a large crossbow to destroy the old tower. It's not immediately obvious how to get to the crossbow, and if you're not keeping a sharp lookout, you'll spend a lot of time wandering around in vain. Find the room with the sword rack and look at the wall directly to the left of the sword rack. Part of the wall will have a different pattern than the rest of the wall. Attack this part of the wall, and a secret door will open. Follow the hall to the large crossbow and destroy the old tower. The teleporter inside the remains of the old tower will take you to a small alcove containing the Mill Key.

THE BONE DUST OF LORIC

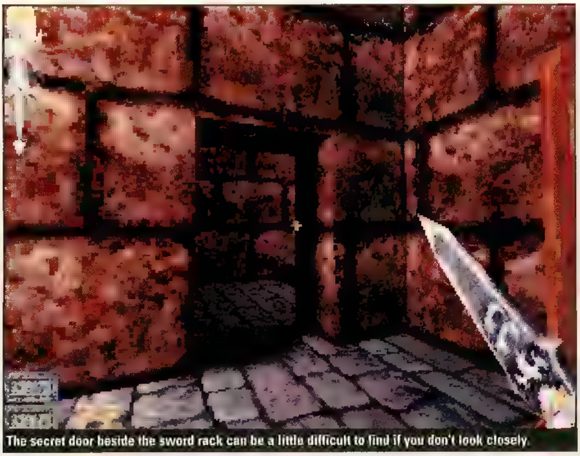
Take the Bones of Loric into the mill and approach the large turning gears. You should be given the message, "The bones are crushing nicely. Go outside and collect the dust." The Bone Dust of Loric is indeed outside the mill waiting for you.

POTION OF MITHRILL TRANSMUTATION

Take the Bone Dust of Loric to the Skull Wizard's chamber in Blackmarsh. Jump into the pool of yellow water and the Potion of Mithrill Transmutation will be created and should appear before you.



Jump across the rafters to this door and activate the trigger inside to get the shovel.



The secret door beside the sword rack can be a little difficult to find if you don't look closely.

Grab it and head back into Barbican.

CASTLE KEY

When you've reached the Skull Wizard's room in Barbican, open the wooden shutters and jump out. In the underwater tunnels is the Mithrill Wall. When you approach the wall it should turn to wood. Hack the wall and enter the small room containing the Castle Key. Now you can go back into the castle and open the door that will take you the King's Court.

TAILOR'S KEY

The Tailor's Key is in the Forgotten Chapel. To get to the Forgotten Chapel, enter the Inner Courtyard and break the stained glass windows behind the guillo-

The **Monsters** of **Blackmarsh**

- **Spiders** can do a surprising amount of damage if you're not careful. The key to beating these creatures is to maintain a safe distance from them at all times. When confronted with a spider, run up to it, attack it, and quickly back off. Repeat this as many times as necessary. Crouching while fighting the spiders makes it much easier to aim.

- **Archers** are especially annoying because of their ranged attack. When facing Archers, you'll want to strafe around to avoid their arrows. Another tactic is to rush the Archer and duck right as he fires. The arrow will fly over your head, and you should have enough time to whack his legs a couple of times before he draws and fires again.

- The **Skull Wizard** fires flaming skulls in rapid succession. More annoyingly, he likes to teleport around the room during the fight. As with the Archers, a good strategy is to strafe and duck while rushing at him to attack with a melee weapon. A ranged weapon will definitely help, but it may be a better idea to conserve your manna for when you really need it.

- The **Hydra** have both a ranged attack and a deadly melee attack. Stay away from prolonged contact with these things as much as possible. If you have a melee weapon, now is the time to use it. Something the hydra has to its disadvantage is that it can't see out of water. If you see one just idling near the surface of some water, try jumping on its back.

- **Golems** are probably the easiest monsters to kill. You will always want to use a melee weapon against Golems. Just remember to back off quickly after each of your attacks so he can't pound you with his massive fists. The AI for the Golems will often not allow him to walk up or down sloped surfaces. They will get stuck at either the top or bottom of the slope which makes them sitting ducks.

- **Imps** are small flying creatures that either fire projectiles or dive bomb you. When dealing with imps, avoid large open areas. Instead try to lure them into small rooms with a low ceiling. This will limit how high they can fly and will also decrease the likelihood of a dive bomb attack. They can't take a lot of damage and are easy to kill once you've mastered the art of getting them into small rooms.

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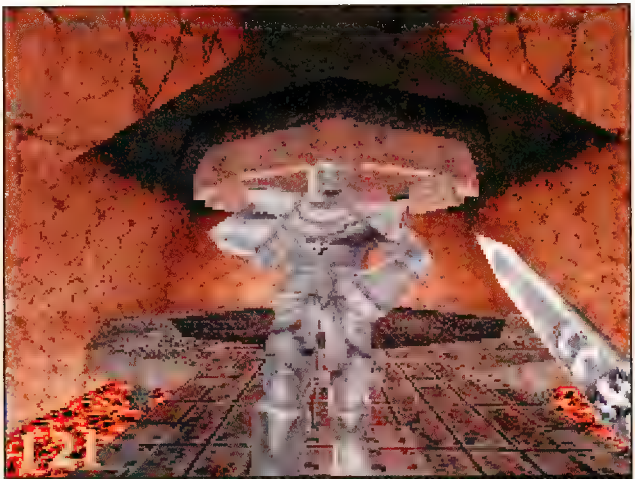


You have to watch out for the strong arm of the Stone Golem, even though these guys are probably the easiest monsters to kill. Use a melee weapon against 'em, and you should be fine.

tine. This will reveal an area behind the stained glass. In this area is a moveable block with a circular pattern on it. Push the block straight back until it won't move anymore. Follow the hallway until you reach the entrance of the Forgotten Chapel. The Tailor's Key is inside the spider's chamber. Enter the small room with the body encased in a web. Hack the body, and the Tailor's Key will appear in the short hallway you came in through. Grab it and take it back to the tailor's shop in the King's Court.

DISRUPT MAGIC SCROLL

The Disrupt Magic Scroll is in the tailor's closet. The tailor's shop is located in the King's Court and has a sign in front of it with a needle and a spool of thread on it. Go to the top floor of the tailor's shop and approach the metallic closet. Since you have the Tailor's Key it will automatically open. Hack away the wooden panels in the back of the closet to reveal a small room. Enter this room and get the Disrupt Magic Scroll. Now you can break through the large barrier blocking the Palace Entrance.

SHOVEL

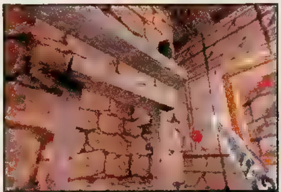
Before you go into the Palace Entrance, you have a couple of other items to find, the first of which is the Shovel. The shovel is located in the Stables. The Shovel can be difficult to find if you don't look at the ceiling area in all rooms. Find the room in the upper level of the stables where you can see a door high up in the rafters. To get to this door, you'll have to go up a couple of ramps and jump across the beams. Once you finally reach the door, go inside and activate a switch that will trigger another door in the same room down below. This room contains the Shovel. With the Shovel in hand, you can dig for the Treasure Key.

TREASURE KEY

The Treasure Key can be found in one of two places. First, go find the slain stable keeper to see if he left a note behind. The slain stable keeper is in the Stables in a room on the first level blocked off by bales of hay. Hack through the hay and enter the room. If he left a note behind, it should say he buried the key by the tree and the forge. Go to the blacksmith's shop in the Stables and walk over the area beside the tree. A hole will appear with the Treasure Key floating over it. If this doesn't work, then go to Anton's grave. His grave is just outside the undertaker's shop in the Inner Courtyard. Run over his grave and a hole will appear with the Treasure Key floating over it. With the Treasure Key in hand, you will be able to access the treasure room in the Palace Entrance.

AMULET OF HUNGER

The Amulet of Hunger is located in the treasure room in the Palace Entrance. There's really not a whole lot involved in finding this item. Just storm all the rooms until you reach it. Now that you have the Amulet of Hunger, you will be able to gain access to the Altar of the Brotherhood of Hunger.



Climb up through the chimney to get to the room with the magical grindstone.

THE QUEST FOR SAND, GLASS, AND GRINDSTONE

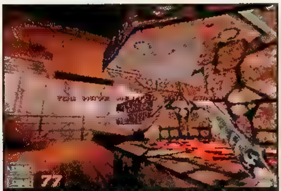
You must first approach the Altar of the Brotherhood of Hunger to activate the next chain of events. The Altar of the Brotherhood of Hunger is located on the second floor of The Shoppe in the King's Court. In this room, there should be a bed and a small chest. Hack the chest and attack the wall behind it. A secret door will open revealing the Altar of the Brotherhood of Hunger. Approach the altar, and you will be given your quest.

STABLE KEY

The Stable Key is found in the Stables behind the fireplace in the blacksmith's shop. Go to the second floor of the blacksmith's shop and press the button beside the fireplace to reveal a secret room. Go inside and get the Stable Key. Now you can enter the stable room. The stable room is in the upper level of the Stables.

SAND

There's no great mystery to finding this one. After you open the stable room, you will go down a path and into the actual stables. You'll find the Sand hovering over a trough.



Once you have the Sand, you must take it to a stone to melt it down into a Bead of Glass.

BEAD OF GLASS

To get the Glass Bead, you must take the Sand to the stove inside the blacksmith's shop. The Glass Bead will be created and float in front of you (see above picture).

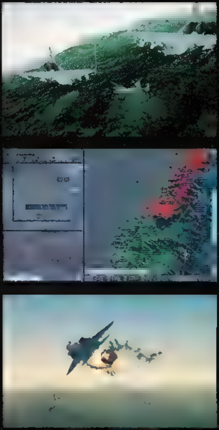
THE GRINDSTONE AND THE LENS OF SEEING

You must take the Bead of Glass to the Grindstone to make the Lens of Seeing. The Grindstone is located in a secret room in the Inner Courtyard. In one of the buildings is a fireplace that gives the message "This is no ordinary fireplace" when you approach it. Crouch to get inside the fireplace and jump up the small ledges until you reach the top. Approach the Grindstone, and the Lens of Seeing will be made for you. With the Lens of Seeing, you will now be able to see though the magical wall that is in another part of the Inner Courtyard.

POWER OF DESTROY CRYSTAL GOLEM

A magical wall is located in the great room in the Inner Courtyard. You should be able to see a teleporter through this wall. Go into the teleporter; you will be in a small area containing the Arch of the Golem. Go through the arch to gain the power you need to destroy the Crystal Golem.

WHAT DOES "MERCY" SOUND LIKE IN RUSSIAN?



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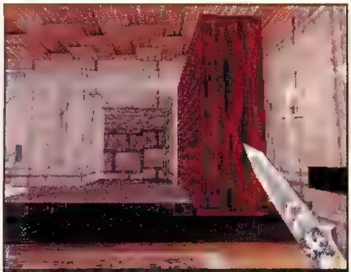
THE CRYSTAL GOLEM

The Crystal Golem is located in the lower levels of the Inner Courtyard. However, it can be a bit tricky to find the passageway down to the lower levels. The entrance is located in the second floor of the undertaker's shop. Press a button beside a bookcase to reveal a secret opening. Explore the lower levels until you reach the Crystal Golem. Kill the Crystal Golem, and the passageway to Famine will open.


Activate the switch beside this bookcase to reveal the passageway to the lower dungeons where you will find the Crystal Golem.

FAMINE'S DOMAIN

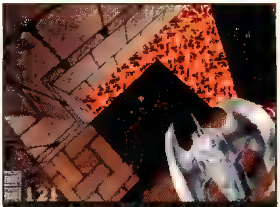
Defeating Famine isn't that difficult if you have some Tomes of Power and a healthy supply of manna. Always keep a Tome of Power active while fighting Famine. Keep moving around to avoid getting hit by his attacks. Be sure to collect the healing vials and manna spread through the room and keep dishing out the damage. After you've hit Famine enough times, he will die in a brilliant display of light.

MAZAERA

The puzzles in Mazaera are not as linear as they are in Blackmarsh. There are many items to acquire, and some can be picked up in any order. The main object in this hub is to reclaim the four elements (Fire, Water, Air, and Earth) and bring them to the Bridge of Stars so that the passageway to the Well of Souls can be opened. This is where Death, the second rider of the apocalypse, awaits. However, there are a number of other items that you must locate first to give you access to the areas containing the various elements. The first thing you must find is the Emerald Key. The Emerald Key will give you access to the first two elements (Fire and Water). Then you must locate the Jade and Crystal skulls in to gain access to the last two elements (Air and Earth). Once you've got all four elements, you must place them on the Bridge of Stars, and you'll be ready to fight the second horseman, Death. As if that weren't enough, there are two more kinds of monsters to deal with in this hub.

THE EMERALD KEY

The Emerald Key is located in the Obelisk of the Moon. When you enter the room, walk around the back and trigger both floor plates. The black obelisk will rise into the Air, and three doors will be opened. Two of the doors open to the areas where you will have to later place the Jade and Crystal skull. The third door will lead you to a metallic bridge spanning a pit of lava. Before you venture out onto that bridge, look straight down over the edge of the platform you're standing on. You should be able to see a floor that you can jump to if you're careful. Enter the teleporter and open a door, and you will find yourself in a room with the Emerald key.

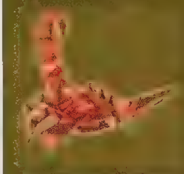

Save yourself some trick jumps by dropping down to this platform.

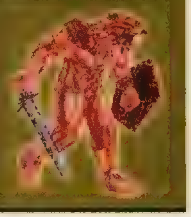
The **Monsters** of **Mazaera**

Mazaera introduces a couple of new monsters for you to deal with: Scorpions and Were Jaguars.

- **Scorpions** are bigger than spiders and deadlier too. Deal with them the same way you do with spiders. Attack them at close range and then back off quickly. Remember, you get more experience by killing monsters with weaker weapons, so use the weakest weapon you think you can safely get away with.
- The **Were Jaguars** and **Were Panthers** are the two of the fastest and most cunning creatures in the whole game. They're the most human-like opponent you will face both in appearance and in movement. They're very agile and will tear you up so fast you'll never know what happened. Avoid close contact with these beasts at all costs. It's impossible to engage in a melee attack with these beasts without coming away hurt. You'll definitely want to use a powerful ranged weapon with these guys, and if you must get up close and personal with one, treat him like you would a human deathmatch opponent. They're almost that smart.

Despite their ferocity, there is an easy way to use their AI against them. Lure them into a narrow corridor and keep firing projectiles at them. They will stop to duck, and they can't move forward at the same time they're ducking. Be sure to aim at their feet. The narrowness of the corridor will prevent them from rolling from side to side to avoid your blows. When trapped like this, they are virtually helpless, and it is simply a matter of hitting them enough times to bring





ELEMENT OF FIRE

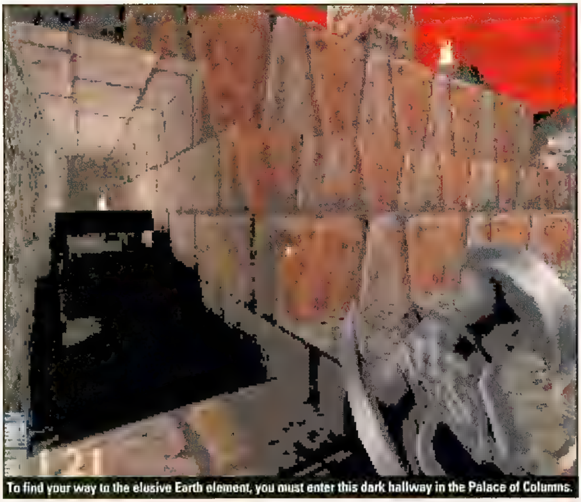
Acquiring the Element of Fire is probably the most difficult task in this whole hub simply because of all the perfectly timed jumps it requires. One false move, and you're toast. However, with a little bit of skill and a small leap of faith, you can reduce the number of trick jumps you have to do.

When making jumps to a moving platform, watch it rise and fall several times. Count how many seconds it stays under the lava before rising again. When you are fully ready, jump! Landing is just as important as the jump itself, and if you slip up, it'll cost you your life. When you land, you will maintain your forward momentum for a couple of steps and can inadvertently run off the edge of the platform you so carefully jumped to. To prevent this from happening, lightly tap your "back" key when landing to make yourself come to a dead stop upon landing.

Make the first series of jumps to the first button beside the main structure. Save your game! Try jumping across to the ledge to the main building. You must wait until the absolute last second before jumping, but you can make it. Then carefully walk around to the back of the building and jump to the second button. Jump back to the main building and perform the same routine with the third button. All the platforms should stop moving, and a bridge will extend to the main building. Now isn't that much more fun than making roughly sixteen skill jumps and constantly reloading your game every time you mess up? It should be smooth sailing from here, but remember that a wise man once said, "save early and save often."

JADE SKULL

After acquiring the Element of Fire, you'll be given access to a teleporter that will take you to the Court of 1000 Warriors. In this level, you will come across a broken bridge made out of wooden planks. Instead of trying to cross this bridge, jump down into the are below. Go through the opening in the wall and follow the hallway until you reach water. Dive into the water and swim across to the button on the other side of the room and activate it. Barriers to another room below this one will slowly open. Swim down into this room to find the Jade Skull.


To find your way to the elusive Earth element, you must enter this dark hallway in the Palace of Columns.

ELEMENT OF WATER

The Element of Water is found in the Square of the Stream, appropriately enough. Just after the entrance to the Square of the Stream is an open area with three different doors on each side. Take the right door and you will find a small room with a small pool of water. Make sure you have a Ring of Breathing handy, and dive in. Swim through the underwater maze until you reach the end. Swim up through the exit of the maze, and you will find the Element of Water waiting for you in the next room. Pick it up, and a wall will lower that will allow you passage back to the main square.

SERPENT'S HEART

The Serpent's Heart is also found in the Square of the Stream. After you have acquired the element of Water, a barrier across one of the doors in the main square will open. Go through this door and explore until you come to an area with a large shallow pool. Step on the floor plate at the end of this room, and a platform in the middle of the pool will rise to reveal the Serpent's Heart.

CRYSTAL SKULL

The Crystal Skull is the third item to be found in the Square of the Stream. When you have the Serpent's Heart, take it to the room that lies directly opposite of the area where you first entered this level. Place the Serpent's Heart on the stone in the middle of this room, and the Crystal Skull will rise from the water at the back of the room. Now that you're armed with both the Jade and Crystal Skulls, you can take them to the Obelisk of the Moon and place them in their respective holders. When you do, a wall will open giving you access to an unexplored area. From here, you will find the Element of Earth and Element of Air.

ELEMENT OF AIR

The Element of Air is easy to acquire since there is no obvious test involved. After placing the Crystal and Jade Skulls, go into the newly revealed area and enter the teleporter at the end of the room. This will take you to the Palace of Columns. Once in the Palace of columns, find your way to the teleporter that will take you to the Tomb of the High Priest. This is the level where you will find the Element of Air. Simply explore the level until you've found it. There's no difficult feat to perform to get this one.

ELEMENT OF EARTH

The Element of Earth can be quite elusive especially since the passageway you need to take is so darkly lit. In the Palace of Columns is an outdoor area with a large temple-like structure. Behind this temple is a dark narrow hallway. Go down the hallway and find the teleporter to the Court of 1000 Warriors. Yes, there's more than one way into the Court of 1000 Warriors. Your test for the Element of Earth is to navigate your way through the large moving blocks without getting crushed.

The serrated sword of the Were Jaguar will tear you up fast. Avoid these guys whenever possible.

THE BRIDGE OF STARS

When you have all four of the elements, go back to the Obelisk of the Moon. In the hallways just before you reach the room with the obelisk, you will find a hallway leading to the teleporter that takes you to the Bridge of Stars. Go to the Bridge of Stars and place the four elements in their respective holders. When you have completed this task, the doorway to the Well of Souls will open up. Muster up all your courage and get ready to fight Death.

WELL OF SOULS

Beating Death may seem difficult at first, but once you learn the power of flight, he's easy pickings. The obvious advice is to stay out of harm's way while causing plenty of harm to your opponent, but this is easier said than done. As with Famine, you'll want to keep a Tome of Power active throughout the whole battle. Run around the level collecting manna and healing vials. Most importantly, you will find a Ring of Flight somewhere near the middle area. When you've got the Ring of Flight, take to the Air and fly a safe but close distance behind Death's horse. Hit him in the back with everything you've got. He'll eventually go down.

That's all the tips we've got for now. Be sure to get next month's issue for more *Hexen II* strategy!

Overlooked **Inventory Items**

While playing through the various levels in *Hexen II*, you will pick up various items that will automatically be placed in your inventory and stay there until you decide to use it. It's important not to forget what items you have in your inventory because they can get you out of some serious jams if you use them wisely.

- **The Glyph** of the Ancients works differently for each character class. A single glyph can kill most enemies or at least seriously injure the stronger ones. The Glyphs can be used in areas where you know there are monsters hiding. You have the element of surprise on your side, so why waste it with one of your manna hungry weapons? Toss some Glyphs into the room and save your valuable manna for later. Another use for the Glyphs is to toss them at Spiders and Scorpions when they're chasing you down a hall.
- When facing a particularly strong foe you may want to resort to the **Seal of the Ovinomancer**. This will turn its target into a sheep. Make sure you kill the sheep, because if you don't, it will try to hunt you down and bite you to death. There aren't very many Seals of the Ovinomancer in the game, so make sure you only use these as a last resort.
- **The Invisibility Sphere** will make you invisible to all monsters. This comes in handy when you want to pass through a heavily guarded area quickly without being noticed. You can also use this to survey a new area without being attacked. Once you know what kinds of monsters are in an area and where they are, you can better plan your attack.

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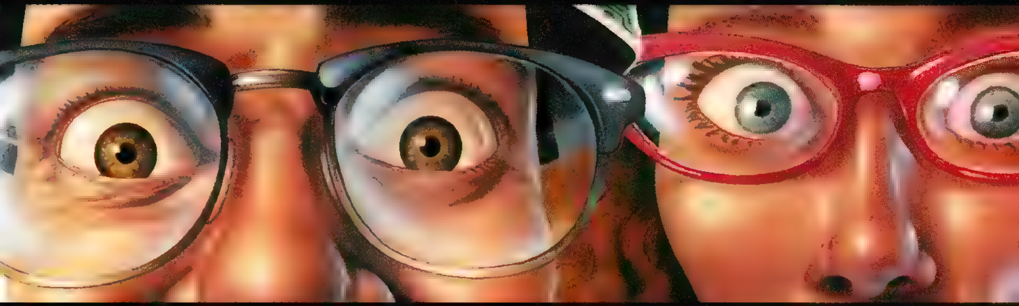
Far Out
survival is a trip...

Product Information Number 329

CRANK UP YOUR CRANIUM, SHAKE UP YOUR SYNAPSES.



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Product Information Number 302

Resident Evil, Part 1

Your deadly mission will be a lot easier with these tips!

CapCom's blood-filled 3D adventure is a lot of fun, but it's darned tough too. Fortunately, *PC Gamer*'s ghostbusters are on hand with the first part of our complete solution!

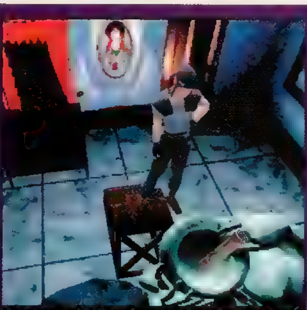
NOTE: The character we'll be using for this solution is Jill, who has an unlimited number of save games (unlike Chris, who requires an ink ribbon for each save). And in *Resident Evil*, death comes quickly and at the most inopportune times, so you'll want to save your game every time you see one of the typewriters spread throughout the mansion.

You begin the game in the lobby with Barry and Wesker. Walk through the door on the left into the dining room, and talk to Barry. While he examines the blood on the floor, go through the door into hallway 3. Walk forward, and as you round the corner, you'll see an undead fellow having lunch with your ex-comrade Kenneth. Turn tail and run back to Barry, who will dispose of the monster in a most gory fashion.

After a short cutscene, you, "The Master of Unlocking," will be handed a lockpick. After you and Barry split, head back to the dining room, and take the wooden crest over the fireplace. Go back to hallway 3, and examine Kenneth's body for some ammo clips. Return to the lobby, and head through the blue double doors on the left into room 4.

Push the metal stairs into place against the statue, and climb them to obtain the map of the first floor. Enter the door to the right, and get your gun ready. Take a few steps forward, and before you can say "Alone in the Dark," a hellhound will come crashing through the window. Kill him, and round the corner. Another hellhound will pop out, so blast him as well. You can get some more ammo clips by pushing the cupboard near the end of the hallway.

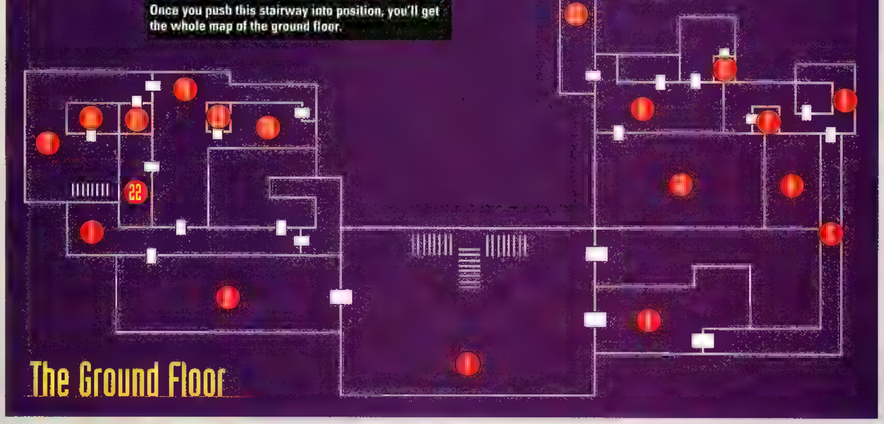
Keep going straight into hallway 6, and take the green herb if you're low on health. Keep going forward until you reach the end of the hallway. Go through the door that's on your right into room 7. Go through the door, take the shotgun, and then head back to the hallway.

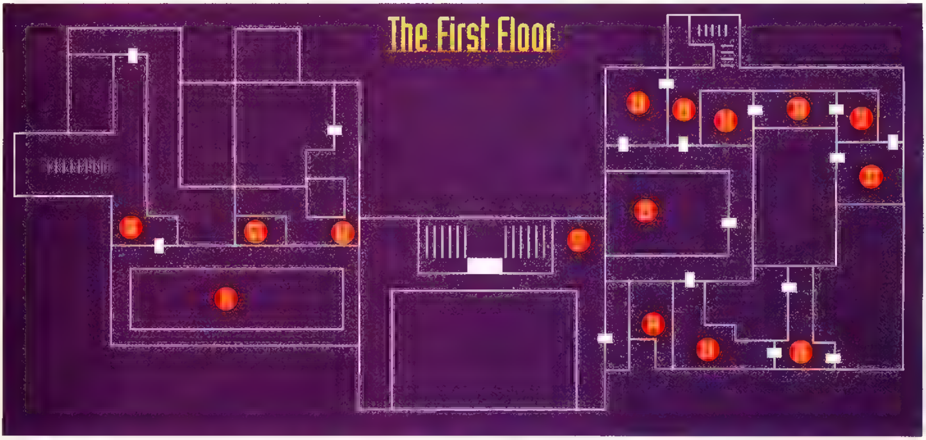

Once you push this stairway into position, you'll get the whole map of the ground floor.

A nasty critter makes its appearance. Waste him while there's still distance between you.

Hey! The ceiling is coming down! Keep trying at the doors until Barry knocks one down and saves the day. Listen to his comment about being reduced to a Jell-O sandwich, then proceed forward to room 9.

Uh oh! It's another zombie. Blow him away, and go through the gray door on your right. Head into the cubby-hold underneath the stairs, and take the chemical. This room contains a storage box, which will help you deal with the cumbersome inventory system — although you're limited to eight items, you can stash as much as you want in the boxes. Go back the way you came, and go through the door on the left into room 12. Unless you want to re-enact a sequence from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, don't take any shots at the crows. Instead, look at the paintings and hit the switches in this order: *newborn, infant, boy, young man, middle aged man, old man.* Head to the end of the hall and hit





the switch underneath the painting, and voila — anther crest.

Go back to the main hallway, and Barry will give you some zombie-splatterin' acid rounds. Go back into the dining room, and go through the door at the back into hallway 3. Make your way to the end of the hallway, and go through the red door on the left. In the music room, push away the shelf and take the music notes, then use them on the piano. A secret door opens. Head through the wall. Take the golden crest, and replace it with the wooden crest. Go back to the dining room, and stick the golden crest above the fireplace. Walk to the grandfather clock, and take the key behind it. Return to the main hall, and go up the stairs. Go through the door on the right into room 14.

Oucharoo! Looks like another one of your teammates bit the dust. At least he left a nice present for us — take the bazooka and run back to the door. Head across the second story of the lobby to room 15, which is the balcony overlooking the dining room. Kill or avoid the zombies, then push the statue off the balcony. Head downstairs, and go all the way back to hallway 17.

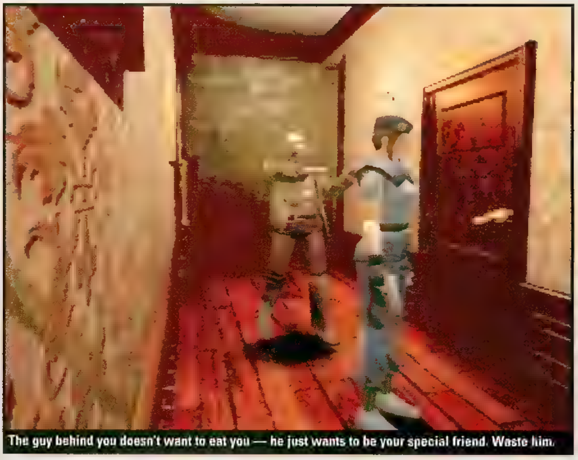
Not more zombies! It's not as easy to dodge these guys, though you're welcome to try. Room 18 contains another item box, where you can stow any stuff you won't be needing. Loop around to hallway 19, dodge the zombies, and enter room 20.

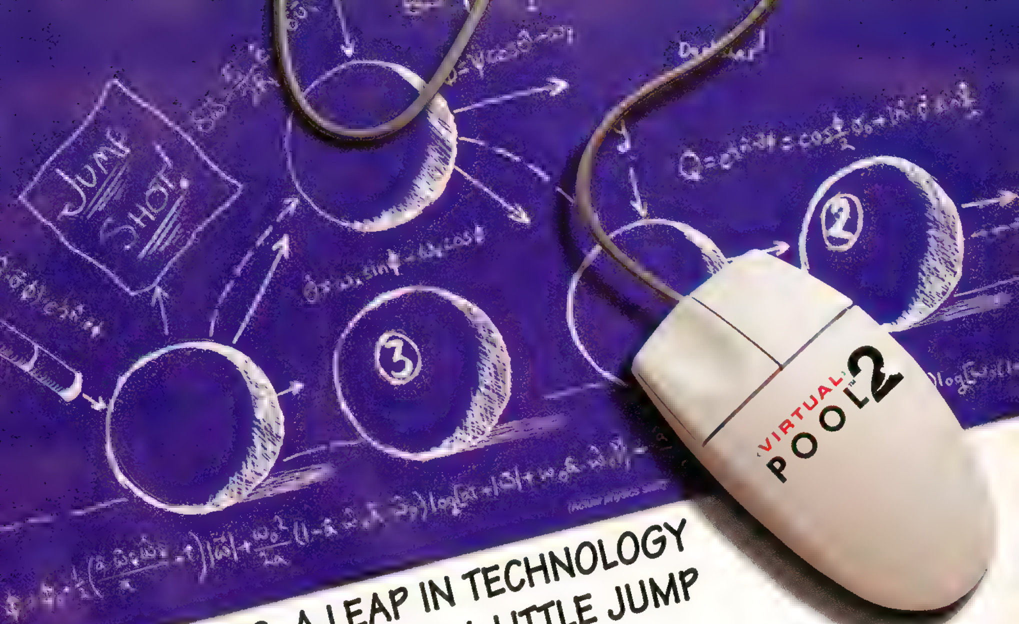
Hey hey hey! I didn't order any pancakes! Oh well — just hang in there and Barry will save your bacon.

That evil plant is mighty unfriendly, so let's remedy the situation. Pour the chemical into the water pump, and that sucker will die on the vine. Walk past the plant and take the key. This room contains lots of life-giving herbs, so plan to stock up — but be sure to keep an inventory slot open for later on. If you want some insight into the back-story, enter room 22 for a look into the last few days of the groundskeeper — but be ready to dispatch a zombie who pops out of the closet. And if you're running low on ammunition, room 21 in hallway 17 provides a few clips and shotgun shells.

Head on back to the dining room, and take the blue jewel from the wreckage of the statue. Go to the tiger statue in room 23, pop in the blue eye, and take the Wind Crest. Stash it in one of the stock rooms. Go upstairs to room 25, through the two double blue doors.

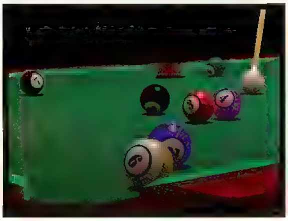
Ah! An armory. Push the two statues on top of the two grates, then push the button on the floor. The glass case will pop open, revealing the Sun Crest. Put that bad boy in your inventory, and head back the way you came — but before you do anything else, head into room 24, where you find some herbs, and your good buddy Richard, who's in sorry shape indeed. That boy's in need of some serum, so go and grab some — it's located downstairs in stock room 18. After you


The guy behind you doesn't want to eat you — he just wants to be your special friend. Waste him.

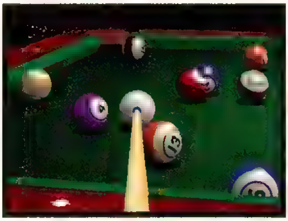


SOMETIMES, A LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY TAKES A LITTLE JUMP

Actual PC screenshots



- All new physics model that allows you to call shots and even jump balls!



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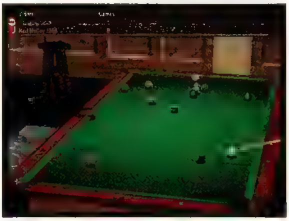

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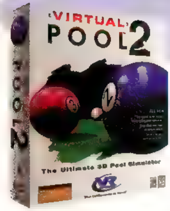

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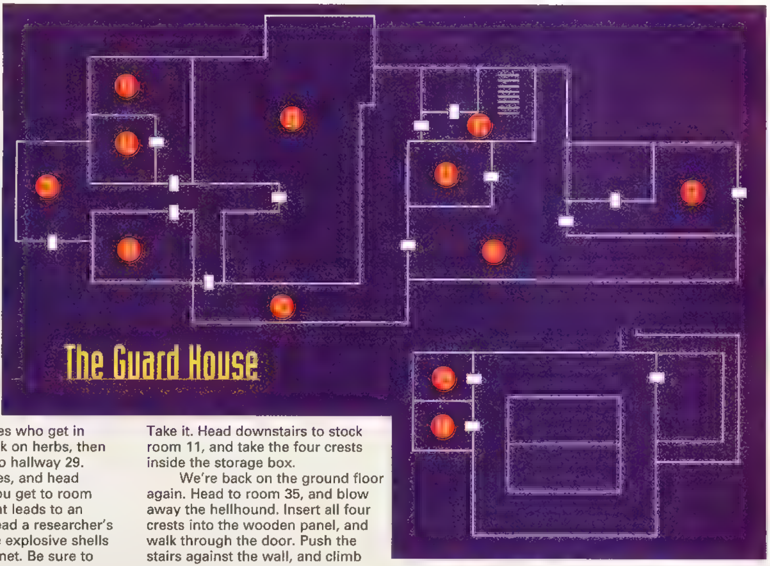

administer the serum, Richard will die — but at least you get his radio! Walk past Richard's corpse, and enter room 26. Kill the zombie. Make sure your health is at max, and enter the wooden door.

Dear Lord! Look at the size of that snake. Pull out any weapon you've got and let that sucker have it. After he goes away, get the Moon Crest and the shells, and walk back outside. The snake's venom will take effect, and you'll go down...

... and you'll wake up again in stock room 18. Stash the crests in the box, then go upstairs to room 28, shooting any zombies who get in your way. Read the book on herbs, then go through the door into hallway 29. Nail those pesky zombies, and head straight forward until you get to room 30. The door on the right leads to an office, where you can read a researcher's notes and acquire some explosive shells by pushing aside a cabinet. Be sure to hit the switch in the insect case.

Just as you cross the room to enter room 32, you'll be jumped by a zombie, so be ready. In room 32, take the lighter, and take the clip that's hiding in the corner beside the right bed. Head out to hallway 29, and go through the blue door into room 33. Use the lighter on the fireplace, and you have a handy map to the second floor right in front of you. Take it. Head downstairs to stock room 11, and take the four crests inside the storage box.

We're back on the ground floor again. Head to room 35, and blow away the hellhound. Insert all four crests into the wooden panel, and walk through the door. Push the stairs against the wall, and climb them to acquire a crank. Go through the metal doors. Take out the two hellhounds, then listen to the radio in your inventory. Take the two blue herbs if you need them. Head through the metal gate to the pool, and stick the crank in the square hole to lower the water level. Cross the bridge, then run like hell to the elevator — don't let the dropping snakes touch you. Kill the two dogs on the lower level, then run to the guard house, killing any more dogs that might get in your way. Once inside the guard house, push the statue over the hole in the middle of the corridor. Enter room 41, kill the two zombies, and grab the shells and the red book. Go into the adjacent room 42, drain the tub, and take the key. Go across the hallway to the safe haven of room 40, where you can save your game and stock up on the stuff you previously put in the storage boxes.

Proceed to hallway 43 — if you positioned the statue right, you won't have a problem — and keep going forward to room 44. Grab the dorm key and run like the wind, since you'll have a bunch of angry hornets on your tail. Enter the room with the number 002 above it. Get the book on the bed, and you can read the Plant 42 report. Push the two dressers away, and go down the ladder. Push all three boxes into the water (this requires a little maneuvering). Head into the water, and open the doors. You can't kill the sharks, so tread water as quickly as possible to room 48. Once you're inside, pull the lever, and the water will be drained. Hit the button right next to the door, and room 49 (right next door) will be unlocked. Go inside and take the dormitory key. Head back upstairs to room 40,

By the end of the epic battle against Plant 42, you'll be praying for this evil bio-hazard to "leaf" you alone.

That wooden panel is the key to opening this door. Just collect all four crests, drop them in their respective holes, and you'll be on your way.

Be A Vigilance Operative Sweepstakes

Official Rules

This sweepstakes only open to legal United States residents 18 years or older and shall only be interpreted and evaluated according to United States Law.

1) Entry:

No purchase necessary. Only one entry by e-mail or regular mail per 24 hour period (12:01AM EST - 11:59PM EST), per person, family, household, or e-mail account and any additional entries will void all entries of that participant. To enter, complete the official sweepstakes entry form displayed on the Vigilance website at www.vigilance.com or www.pcgamer.com or located in the December and January issues of PC Gamer magazine. You will be asked to provide your name, address, telephone number, date of birth, gender and email address (if applicable). You can also enter via US Mail by sending a 3" x 5" card on which you have hand printed your name, address, telephone number, date of birth, gender and e-mail address (if applicable) to: Be a Vigilance Operative Sweepstakes, 1325 Howard Avenue, #302, Burlingame, CA 94010. One entry allowed per envelope Each entry must be mailed separately

The sweepstakes begins at 12.01AM EST on November 1, 1997 and ends 11 59PM EST on February 15, 1998. All on-line entries must be received by 11.59PM EST on February 15, 1998. Entries that are printed by machine or otherwise mechanically reproduced or photocopied will not be accepted. Mail in entries must be postmarked no later than February 16, 1998 and received by February 23, 1998

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2) Winner Selection:

Winners will be selected in a random drawing from all eligible entries received, to be held on or about March 15, 1998. Drawing will be conducted by an independent judging organization whose decisions are final and binding in all respects regarding this sweepstakes. Grand Prize winner will be notified by telephone on or about March 18, 1998 First Prize winners will be notified by U.S Mail Odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received

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One (1) Grand Prize: A trip for two (2) to New York City where the winner will receive a $5,000 shopping spree at The Detective Store International (Shopping spree will be awarded in the form of a gift certificate which must be redeemed by December 31, 1998 Sales tax is included in the $5,000). The trip consists of two coach round-trip air tickets from a major airport nearest the winner's place of residence, two nights (one room, standard double occupancy) in a New York City hotel of Sponsor's choice including tax and $500 spending money. The Grand Prize winner will also receive a 24 month lease on a BMW Z3 roadster convertible and will have his or her face or likeness rendered into the HEAT.NET online version of Vigilance and the extent of the winner's appearance and inclusion (if any) in the game will be at the sole option of the Sponsor Approximate retail value, $18,725. (Actual value may vary based upon point of flight departure. Automobile lease based upon prepaid lease valued at $11,625) Thirty day advance notice required for travel Trip must be taken by December 31, 1998 Blackout dates and other travel and accommodation restrictions may apply. Expenses not specifically stated are the sole responsibility of the winner. Winner is responsible for any license, title, registration, tax, dealer preparation, insurance, pick-up costs at dealer selected by Sponsor or any other fees associated with the vehicle and must agree to and meet all terms and conditions required by the leasing agency Lease is limited to 10,000 miles per year for the lease period and winner is responsible for excess mileage at a rate of $0.15 per mile and excess wear and tear on vehicle's return as determined by Lessor In lieu of the lease, winner may elect to receive the stated lease vehicle value in a one-time cash payment and will receive that payment if winner is not a licensed driver One hundred (100) First Prizes A one year subscription to PC Gamer magazine. Approximate retail value, $29.95 each. Total prize value approximately $21,720. No substitution, cash redemption or transfer of prizes permitted except that Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize of equal or greater value, or the cash equivalent, if an advertised prize is unavailable

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5) General Conditions:

By entering, sweepstakes entrants agree to abide by the terms of these Official Rules All federal, state and local laws and regulations apply All taxes on Prizes are the sole responsibility of the prize winner Grand Prize winner must execute an Affidavit of Eligibility, a Liability Release and a Publicity Release, where lawful, which must be completed, signed and returned within seven (7) days following attempted notification or prize will be forfeited and awarded to an alternate winner. Grand Prize winner's travel companion, or their parent or legal guardian if companion is a minor, must also sign and return a Liability and Publicity Release prior to issuance of travel documents. Return of prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and selection of an alternate winner. Acceptance of a prize constitutes permission for SegaSoft and its respective advertising and promotional agencies to use winners' names, likenesses, voices, addresses and biographical information for advertising and promotional purposes without additional compensation unless prohibited by law and constitutes further permission of the Grand Prize winner to include winner's face or likeness in the HEAT.NET online version of Vigilance, the extent of their appearance and inclusion (if any) in the game at the sole option of Sponsor Winner waives any right to review or approve of such appearance and inclusion (if any), which can be in any style or manner selected by Sponsor. By entering, participants release and agree to hold harmless SegaSoft and its respective parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising and promotion agencies, and all of their respective directors, officers, employees, representatives and agents from any and all liability for any injuries, loss or damage of any kind to person, including death and property, due in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, arising from or in connection with the acceptance, possession, use or misuse of a Prize or participation in the Be a Vigilance Operative Sweepstakes

6) Winner's List:

The names of the prize winner will be posted on the Vigilance website on the Internet at www.vigilance.com and may also be obtained after April 1, 1998 by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Be a Vigilance Operative Sweepstakes - Winner's List, 1325 Howard Avenue, #203, Burlingame, CA 94010. Requests must be received by February 15, 1998.

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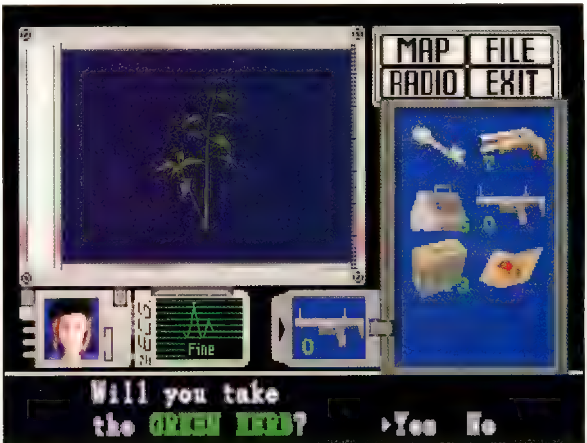

Will you take the GREEN HERB?

The only down side to the herbs is that they take up a slot of your inventory. Mix the different colors together to create even more powerful healing agents.

save your game, and grab your bazooka.

Walk to room 50, and blow away the two spiders. Note that the pool sticks are in a clock position — take note of the 'time' they show. Get the Red Book out of the stock room, and head back to room 44, the room with the hornets. Run straight across into room 51. Take the white book from the bookshelf and read it — it's a report on how to destroy Plant 42. Once you've read it, replace it with the red book. A secret door will open, but don't go through just yet. Head back to the stock room, save your game, and open up four slots in your inventory. Head back to room 53. To enter, you need to doodle with the keypad, and turn all the red lights on.

All right — it's time to mix ourselves some V-JOLT. Grab four empty bottles. Here's how to do it:

- Fill up two bottles with UMB No. 2, and two with UMB No. 4.
- Combine UMB No. 4 with UMB No. 2.
- Put the water from the sink into the empty bottle.
- Combine the water with UMB No. 2, which will create NP-003.
- Combine this with UMB No. 4.
- Fill one of the empty bottles with UMB
- No. 2.
- Fill up the empty bottle with water, and combine it with the UMB No. 2.
- Fill another bottle with UMB No. 4.
- Combine NP-003 with UMB No. 4.
- Fill another bottle with UMB No. 2.
- Combine UMB 6 with UMB 7.
- Fill up a bottle with water, and combine it with UMB No. 2.
- Use the NP-003 on the No. 13.

Here's another one of those "push the staircase" puzzles. You'll need a mechanical part from the top shelf.

These sharks will give you some trouble when this room is flooded, but we assure you that you'll have the last laugh.

What a pain — But at least you have the V-JOLT. Now, it's time to kick some leafy Plant 42 butt.

Head back downstairs via dormitory room 45. In the basement, hang a right and enter room 54. Dump the V-JOLT on Plant 42's roots. Go back upstairs, and save your game. Unload all the glass containers in the storage box, and stock up on as many weapons as possible (preferably bazooka munitions). Go back to room 51, and go through the secret doorway into the *lair of Plant 42!*

Holy Mother of Mercy! Unload everything you've got into that leafy bastard. When he goes down, take the key from the fireplace.

That does it for the first half of the game — be sure to tune into next month's Ultimate Strategy Guide when we take on the Hunters, and get to suffer through even more cheesy dialog!

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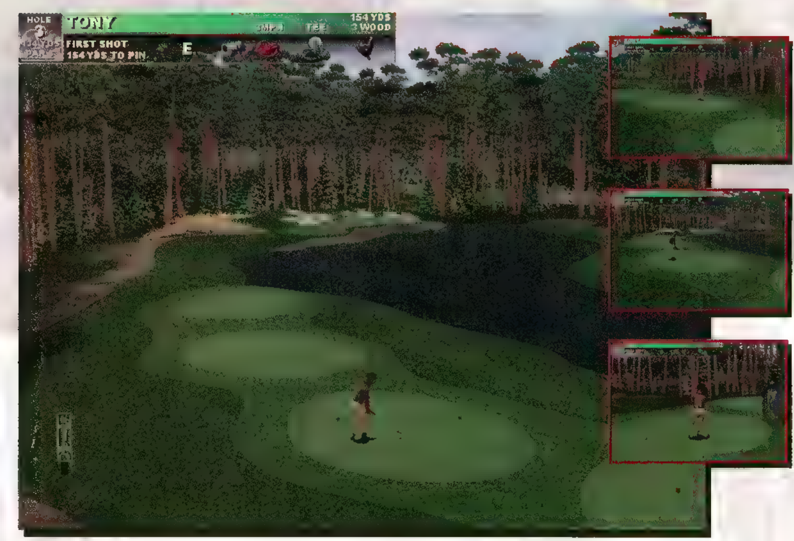

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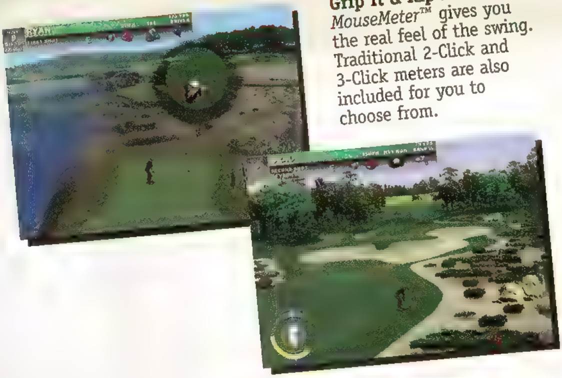

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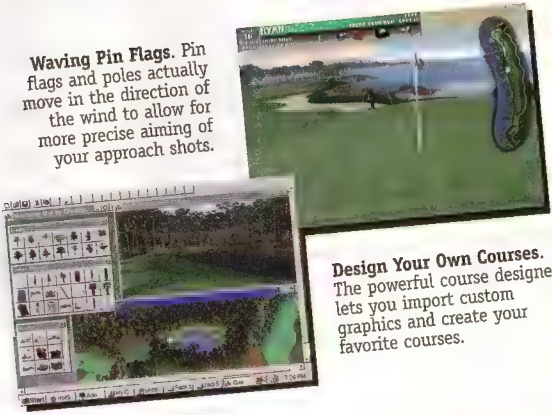

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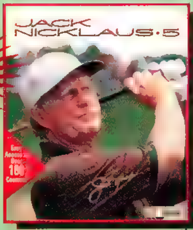

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ACCOLADE

Jack Nicklaus Productions

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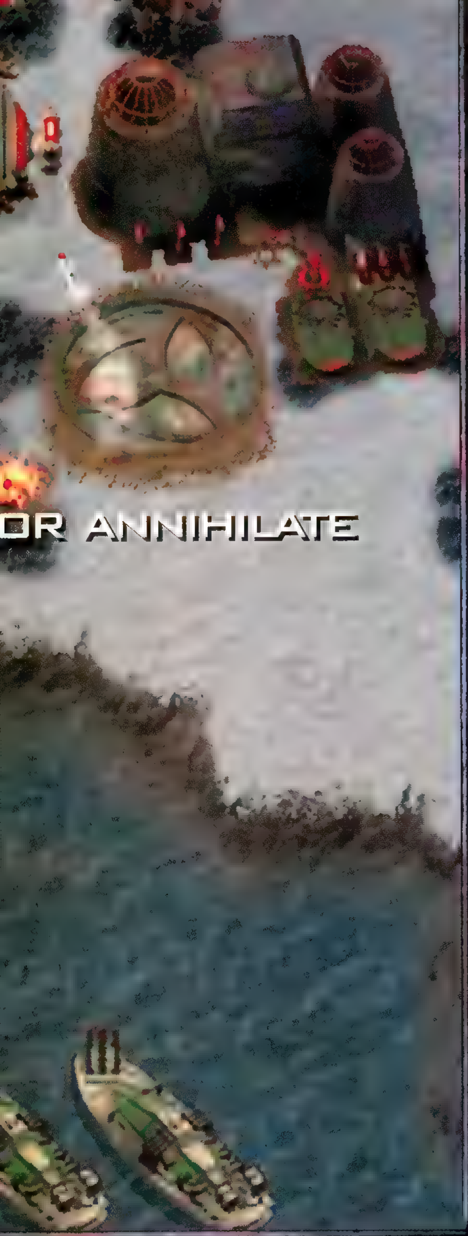

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Product Information Number 233

The Space Bar, Part 2

Still having trouble finishing *The Space Bar*? Look no further!

Here's the second and concluding part of our complete solution to one of this year's best adventures, direct from Steve Meretzky and Patricia Pizer at Boffo Games.

Click may have ears the size of satellite dishes, but he's got something you need — the recipe for the antidote that will help you survive a potentially lethal poison dart attack. So, be nice to this guy, hmm?

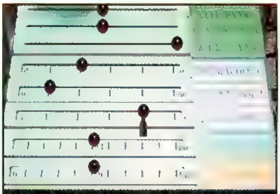
Chat with Click, the red guy with big ears in the casino balcony. The Auditon flashback goes like this:

Watch the opening movie and write down the code in the letter. Set the Clock. Stash the Doz tablet on the table and pick up the Jelly jar. Reach your hand into the waterfall and then enter it. You'll be in the Room of Drips. Put the jar in the basket and pick up the basket. Drop the basket through Window 2. Pull it up and remove the jelly jar, then stash it. Pick up the basket and drop it through Window 1. Pull it up and remove/stash the eel from the basket. Go to the right side area of the workbench. Stash each of the insects you see there.

Using your PDA, check the log. Read the message from Whistle Whistle. Note which insect is to be put in whole and alive, and which is to have five legs in the recipe. Go to the close-up of the drug processor. Pick up the mantis and pull off one of its legs. Drop the leg into the processor and press the analyze button (the one with the question mark). Note the name of this insect and hit the self-clean button on the processor (it looks like a shower head). Pick up the butterfly. Drop it in the processor whole. Analyze it. If it matches the name of the whole insect from the recipe, leave it in there. If not, self-clean again. You now know which insect is which. Follow the recipe directions, putting in all the ingredients (the snathercat saliva is in the jelly jar). Click the Analysis button and get a message that the cerebomb is in stash.

The insectoid Solider is the man to talk to if you want to sample a Pan-Galactic Gargle Blaster.

Go through the waterfall again. Using the Code Controller, press 4, 6, 5, 0. Now exit the room via the door between the waterfall and the clock. There is a ringing phone here. Press TALK and then END on the phone. You now need to set up the maze. Go through the East vine link, then go North and North again. While on this platform, untie the South vine and drop it. Now go West and proceed Southwest. Stash the pail from this platform. Go Northeast, then East and East again. Untie the South vine on this platform and drop it. Reach your tail into the knothole (it's glinting a bit) and stash the token. Go Southwest, East, South, and then West. You're back at the Safehouse platform. Use the Code Controller again, and then enter the Safehouse. Wait for three turns. Exit through the door (the alarm will go off now). Quickly go East, North, Northeast, Northeast again, and then East. You are now at Hollowwood and Vine.



Relax, it's not another one of those dreaded slidey-block puzzles! It's still a toughie, though.

Put your cerebomb in the pail. Go to the spaceport and go to the empty locker. Press your tail to the locker and put the pail into the locker, closing it and pressing your tail to it to lock it. Go over to the sign to the right of the arch. Make note of the phone number on it. Go back outside and go to the phone. Check your log for the number for Happy Branches. Put the token into the phone and dial the Happy Branches number. Press the * button, and then 2. Enter the number for the trainer (from the sign in the spaceport). Club the phone and get the token back (just in case you need to re-do this part). Press the # button.

Go to the Kennel. Break the Doz tablet in two pieces. Put one half into bowl C. Put the other half into bowl G. Go back outside. Go to the Spaceport. Open your locker and turn on the noise device. Put it into the pail with the cerebomb. Take it. If the queeps are not asleep, exit this room and wait a few turns. Go back into Spaceport. Repeat until the queeps are asleep, then walk through the arch and watch the movie. It will give you Click's lucky number.

Now go to the Entry Vestibule and select the second locker from the door to the Bar (#572). Enter the correct combination, which is Click's lucky number from his flashback. Open the locker and stash the cerebomb.

By now, the entry vestibule computer should be fixed (if it's after 18:90). Go to the computer and look up the following things: all race information on Neblitz, Ker'Pupu, and Oy-Lee-Ai. It is also recommended that you look at the movie reviews; they're pretty amusing but just there for fun. You can now go chat with Bettaker, the robot Bonkier at the left table in the casino.

Examine the crumbs on the ground near the trash. From the village green, go to the Barbershop. Sit in the chair and get a facial from Hairtrimmer. Get up. (Just for kicks, make sure you examine the maga-

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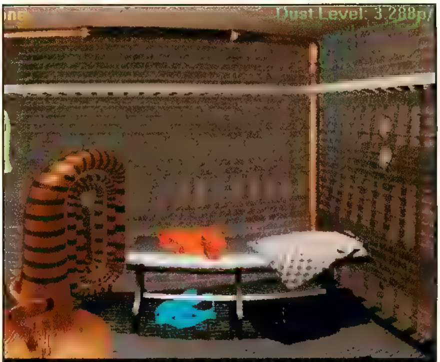
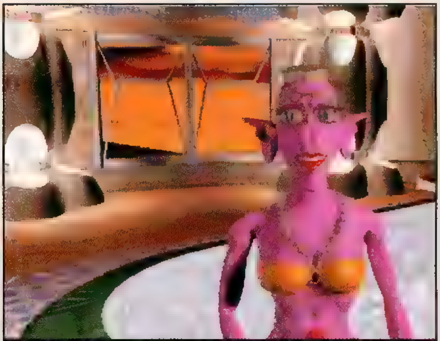


The Deployment Chamber is where you'll wait before being called out onto the field to play a game of futuristic football. However, you'll have more success by arguing and bumping chests with the referee.

zine on the counter). You now have some time to spend. Leave the Barbershop and go to the museum. It's pretty entertaining, and you'll get to see an amusing museum tour if you stick around for a few turns. Make sure you examine the chip display in the Hall of The Creators and preferably the black and white photo. Return to the green and wait a few turns. (There's some stuff here to keep you busy for a little while.) Soon, the coach will show up and deliver you to the Deployment Chamber.

Using the "You" icon, turn the radio on. This will help you follow the game you're supposed to play. When they announce you (Dirtkicker), go up the stairs and onto the field. Then return to the deployment chamber and wait for your event. You will be called for your event. In the meantime, wear the Colorful cloth strips, the pair of metal-and-cloth tubes, the pair of curved plastic pads and pick up the club. Wait until you hear "And now, the home team!", then return to the field and go to the close-up of the referee. "Argue" with him twice, "Curse" him twice, "Kick dirt on" him twice, "bump" him twice, "hit" him twice, and then hit him twice with the club.

You'll be whisked away to the Sound Stage for your interview with the President. On the floor in front of the President's desk is a black chip. Using the "You" icon, insert the chip. You'll be given a few screens of information including your PIN number. This is *important*! Greet and chat with the President. Pretty much any response you give once the chip is in will work fine and produce



Cilia the belly dancer has some useful information for you, but you'll have to catch her between dances, or she won't have time to chat.

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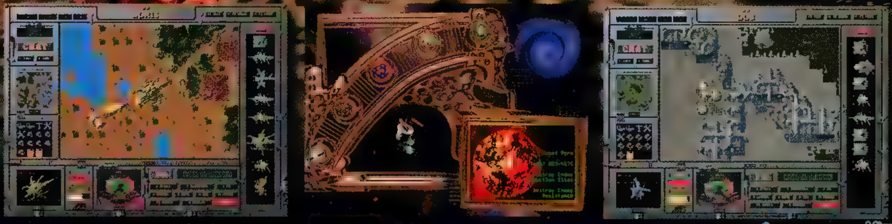

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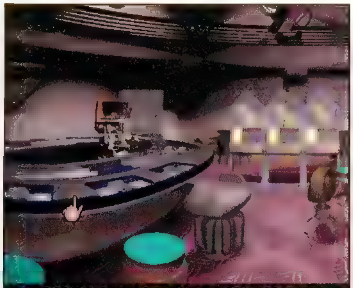
different dialogs. There will be an ad break, a final movie, and then you go back to the bar!


At the Bibblebonk gambling tables, you'll be able to reprogram the odds in your favor and make some quick cash.

Once you've solved the Vildroid flashback, click on Bettaker's high level programming unit screen over his torso. Enter the four-digit PIN number you got from Bettaker's flashback and click "OKAY." Choose "Video Surveillance Information." Get the four-digit code to access Gorb's surveillance equipment (the code is 2294). Return to the main menu. Choose "Set Bibblebonk Payoffs" and then "Bibblebonk Bets." Click each pair of odds in the "TOP" column until they're all 7500:1. Choose "DONE."

Pick up your credit chip and insert it in the bibblebonk table. Choose all the options in the "Top" column, betting the same number of credits on each ("Zip," "Single," "Double," and "Triple"). Press "Ready." One of your bets should win, but since you need 30000 to see Gorb, you may need to repeat the previous two steps. Choose "Stop Playing" when you have won enough money.

Chat with Cilia, the belly dancer on the runway (you can only do this when she is not dancing, and she won't stop dancing until 19:00 at the earliest, but if you are following this it should be well after that time.) **Note**: Waiting for Cilia to stop dancing can try the patience of Job. Insider tip: save the game while you're standing in front of her. If you restore several times from there, she'll sit down after a couple of tries.

Once you've seen Woona's movie, take the drill off the wall and stash it. Exit to the dock and open the boat locker. Stash the gas can and exit the close-up. Parker will show up. Board the rowboat and untie it. Click on the barge and tie the rowboat to it. Board the barge and wait for several turns (you'll see a dock outside) Exit the barge. Go to the police boat and stash the motor. Enter the tower and read the post-it note. Go to the control panel. Raise the lever. Wait until the top two numbers are equal, and then press the top button. Wait until the middle number equals nine and enter the combo from the post-it. Then press the red button on the wall of the tower.

Go down the slide and wait until the barge comes to an area of open water (you'll get an exit arrow over the doorway). Exit the barge. Untie the row boat from the barge and put the motor on the rowboat. Pour the gas from the gas can into the motor and start the motor. Click on the link arrow to the left (if facing the motor). Tie up to the dock, turn off the motor, and exit the boat.

Enter the tower. On the control panel, turn the top right switch to the right, the top left off, the middle right down, the middle left on, the lower right to the left, and the lower left to the on position. Press WAIT. In the next turn, turn the top left switch on. Press WAIT twice. Then turn off the top left and flip the middle right into the up position. Press WAIT. Turn the top left on again and turn off the middle left. Press WAIT. Finally, flip the lower right to the right. Press done.

Exit to the dock, turn on the motor, board the boat, and untie the boat. Click on the barge and tie the boat to the barge. Drill a hole in the boat and wait five turns. Hold the babaloo sandwich up to the airholes on the crate nearest the water. Throw the sandwich in the water. Open the crate and enter it. Wait two more turns.

After solving the Trisecks flashback, click on Cilia, chat with her, and choose "Let's make a deal." She'll be your lifelong friend and will shortly provide you with an important item. You will need to wait a while (20-30 ticks) until Cilia gives you the item.

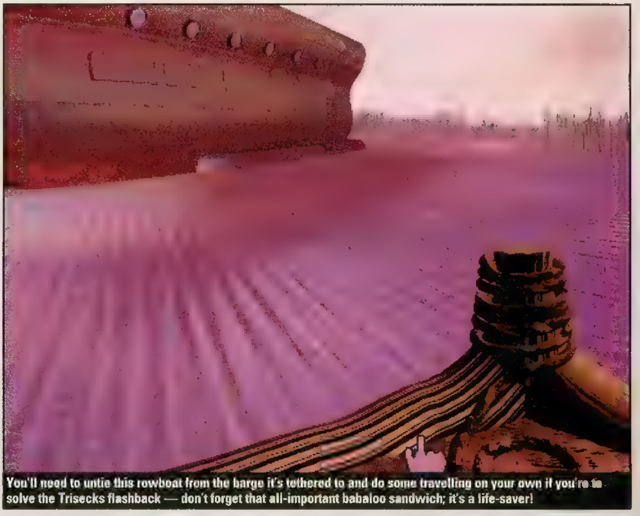
Now is a good time to wrap up a few loose ends from before. Go to the Bar Area and chat with Fleebix. Choose "propose a deal." He will tell you the frequency that the criminal is transmitting on (make note of it). Proceed to the Lily Pad (the room off the bar area across from the Casino). It won't be open until 19:50, so you may need to come back to it. Once you can enter it, go over to the kelp trap and open it. You'll discover a body. Search it (you'll automatically stash a dart). Exit the close-up and go to the light in the water. Stash the underwater light.

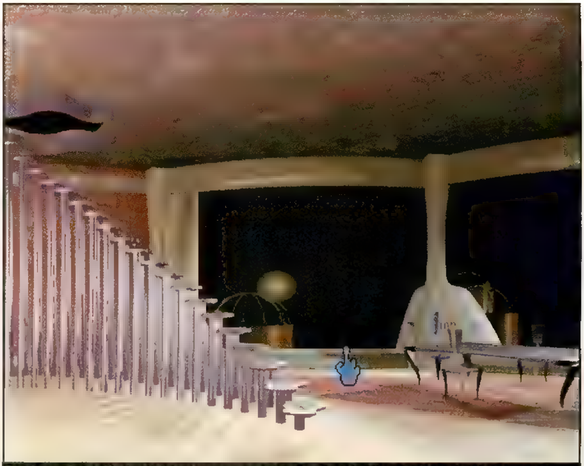
Now you can return to Click and get the antidote recipe from him. Once there, chat with him. Choose "refuse." Enter his locker combination in the input box. Ask Click about the dart. Give him the cerebomb. He'll tell you how long you need to megawave the Vedj fruit to make an antidote. Go to the kitchen and put the Vedj fruit in the megawave. Cook it for the amount of time Click told you. Eat the fruit. You can now survive the dart attack.

By now, you should be able to go back to Cilia, and she'll give you a VidDisc. If not, just hang out a couple of turns and she'll give it to you. Now you're ready to identify the killer!

Go to the Observation Balcony South and proceed to the Catwalk. Go to the close-up of the viewscreen. Press the buzzer. Pick up your credit chip and hold it up to the viewscreen. Unplug the sprayer on Gorb's desk. Go to the video cabinet and enter the combination you got from Bettaker's high level programming (2294). Open the cabinet and press the eject button. Stash that VidDisc and insert the one that Cilia gave you into the slot. Fast Forward and watch the disk. You'll see the bandleader (really the killer), strangle a moth and *become* the moth. Once you've seen that, eject the disk, stash it and leave the office.

If it's after about 20:00, go back into the Bar Area and go to the Mr. Drink-Vendor 2000. Order the "Armpit Armageddon." Pick it up at the bar. Go to the Moist Grotto. Put the drink on the floor


You'll need to untie this rowboat from the barge it's tethered to and do some travelling on your own if you're to solve the Trisecks flashback — don't forget that all-important babaloo sandwich; it's a life-saver!



The Space Bar is filled with lots of gorgeous art-deco furniture, but those stairs looks like a lawsuit waiting to happen, especially after a beer or six.

near the pool. The creature in the pool will come take it. Take out your underwater light and enter the water. Turn off the jammer you find there and stash it. Get out of the water and stash the light.

You can now chat with Deven-7, the tall blue guy seated in the Dining Area. When you chat with Deven, choose "Chatty," then "Ask about wagering," and finally "Ask about current deal." This will save you time later. Go to Deven's computer and sit at it. Select "Dispatch Negotiating Team." Choose "Other Interested Party" and click to the left of "Swonza-5." Click to the right of "Churg-53," "Zig-64," and then "Dispatch Team." Choose "Other Interested Party" and click to the left of "Politicians." Click to the right of "Norg-72," "Vargas-20," and then "Dispatch Team". Yet again, Choose "Other Interested Party" and click to the left of "Environmentalists." Click to the right of "Pnurth-81," "Lentil-24," and then "Dispatch Team."

Return to the Main Menu and choose "Buyer Bids." Check off the "Accept" column for "Pylon-3," "Clang-2," "Gild-13," "Dork-44," and for "Min. Mart" for mining rights for Rg. Return to the Main Menu and quit.

Enter the hallway and knock on the powder room door. You will hear Quosh respond to your knock. "Validate his Neuroses" then "Tell an anecdote." Return to the computer and sit down at it. Check on the Status of Negotiating Teams. Click on Swonza-5, the Politicians, and the Environmentalists until you get a message indicating that they have been talked down. Return to the Main Menu.

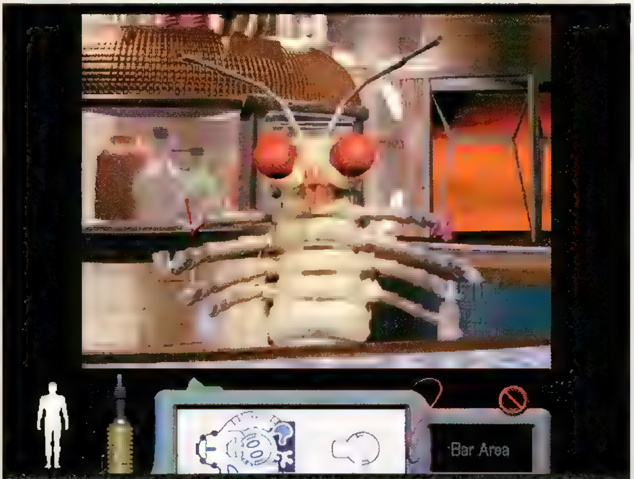
Select "Dispatch Negotiating Team" and choose "A Seller." Click to the left of "Yeef-8" and click to the right of "Lentil-24" and then "Dispatch Team." Click on "A Buyer." Click to the left of "Gild-13." Click to the right of "Pnurth-81," "Zig-64," and "Churg-53," and dispatch the team. Check the status of Negotiating Teams until you get a message indicating that he has been talked down. Go back to the Dispatch screen and click on "A Buyer." Click to the left of "Dork-44." Click to the right of "Lentil-24," and "Vargas-20," and dispatch the team. Return to the main menu and Quit.

Go up the stairway to the pool room. Go greet the Sraffa in the lounge chair near the stairs, Irk-4. When you chat with her, "ask about her terms." Exit the close-up and go back to your computer and sit down.

Check on the status of Negotiating Teams. Keep clicking on "Dork-44" and "Gild-13" until you get a message that the teams were able to talk them up. Return to Main Menu. Go to the "Deal Summary." Submit the offer. Pick two codewords to identify this deal. Pick a codeword from each group (make sure to write it down; you'll need it later). Return to Main Menu. (**Note**: There are several solutions to the negotiations; this is simply one possibility.)

After solving the Sraffan flashback, chat with Deven-7. Select "Yup" and enter the code words you chose in the pop-up box. Deven will give you a high frequency jammer. Set the jammer to the frequency Fleebix gave you earlier. Solving all the flashbacks gets the killer upset, and he will start sending you more emotional messages, which will ultimately launch you into the Kur'Pupu flashback. Wait through Ni'Dopal's messages (#9 will initiate the flashback). While waiting through the messages, move over by the Mr. DrinkVendor 2000 so you'll be in position when the flashback ends.

Watch the movie of your son tripping the alarm. Click on a window and break it. You will be transported out onto the balcony. Examine the vines and make a note of the flower mentioned. You will then return to the bar. Go to Mr. DrinkVendor 2000 and list all the ingredients. Once you find the flower he mentioned in the flashback, find out what drinks are made with that flower and order one. Pick up the drink at the bar and give the drink to the Moths in the Dining Area. This will initiate the closing movie. Congratulations, you've won!



Soldier the bartender can mix you just about any kind of drink you want, but it's not recommended you drink your way through his entire (and extensive) repertoire. Why not stick to prune juice, like they do on "Deep Space 9"?

~~heroin~~

~~s & m~~

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hell, what's left?

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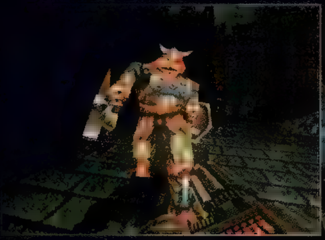

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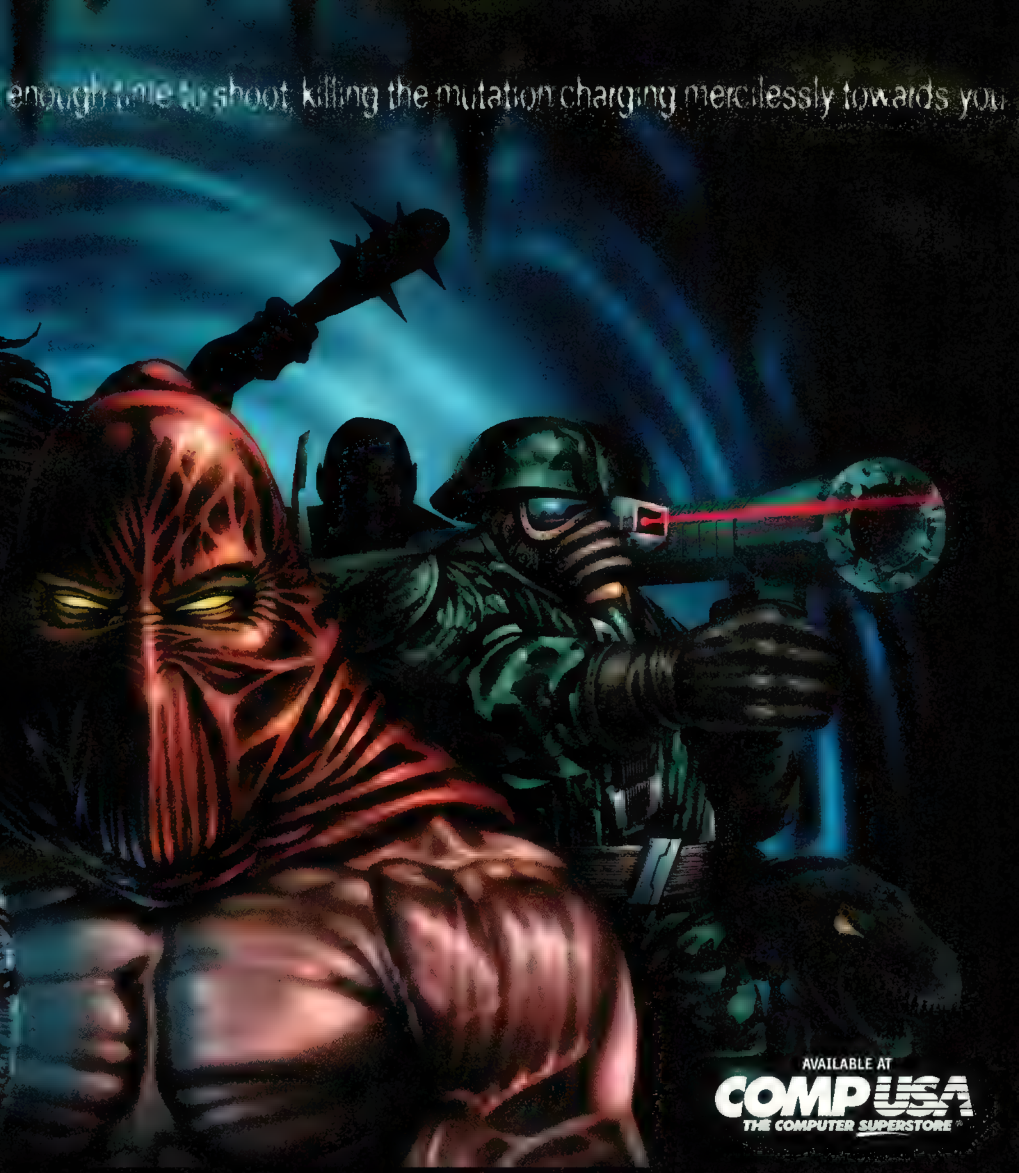
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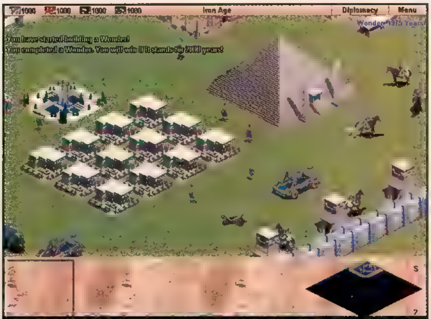
Age of Empires

"Crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentations of the women."

— Conan the Barbarian

Now that the real-time strategy explosion is in full swing, there are countless empires to build and destroy. Leading the charge for this wave of action is Microsoft's *Age of Empires,* which features a sophisticated resource management scheme, a wide variety of units, and thrilling combat. We'll bring you our own in-depth strategies for conquest and advancement in next month's Ultimate Strategy Guide, but for now, we've gone straight to the creators — Ensemble Studios — for these exclusive game-winning tips, and how to succeed on randomly generated maps.



You have started building a Wonder!
You completed a Wonder. You will win if it stands for 2000 years!

If you decide to build your wonder safely behind your city walls, you'll be able to crank out defensive forces to repel any attack with ease, but be careful not to block yourself off from vital resources.

Building Wonders

Though there are many different paths to success in *Age of Empires*, one of the surest routes to world domination in a single or multi-player game is to build a wonder. If built and held for 2000 years, a wonder will result in an automatic victory for your civilization, but a few prerequisites must be satisfied before you're able to begin construction: You must be in the Iron Age (the last of the four ages), and you must have completed construction of a government center. Once both of these feats have been accomplished, a wonder is available for building. But just like the seven wonders of the ancient world, they prove to be a costly enterprise. You must have 1,000 wood, 1,000 gold, and 1,000 stone in your inventory to pay for construction. If all of those conditions are met, you can set your civilians to the task of building a wonder.

There are some immediate hazards you should be aware of. As soon as you begin constructing a wonder, a notification message is sent to everyone in the game, and the location of your construction site will be revealed to every player. If you are able to complete the wonder, another message is sent out to everyone declaring that your civilization will win the game if the wonder stands for 2000 years. A countdown clock is displayed in the upper right corner of the game screen to show how much time is left for each player's wonder.

To ensure that this monument to your civilization's greatness remains intact long enough to win the game, you'll need to choose a secure location. Remember that catapults can fire volleys great distances, and trireme catapults can attack inland targets from the water, so use the natural defenses afforded by the surrounding landscape to your advantage.

The more civilians, the better!

By cranking out dozens of archers to complement your fortress' ballista or guard towers, you'll have the ability to strike the enemy's troops from behind city walls.

Once you've selected a site, be sure you have the resources and manpower to see it through to the end — wonders take a very long time to construct. Make sure you have a steady flow of resources available for a defensive buildup and a lot of free civilians to build the wonder and your defenses faster. Architecture is a key research item when building a wonder because it decreases the build time. Be warned: some civilizations do not get an Architecture upgrade.

It's not uncommon to construct a wonder with more than 40 civilians (the Shang have a great advantage in this area due to their reduced-cost civilians). Make sure you have enough civilians to build your wonder quickly. If you are in a multi-player team game, coordinate your decision to build a wonder with your teammates so that they can move units over to defend your civilians.

Once a notification of a enemy wonder has been received, don't wait too long to mount an assault against it; those 2,000 years will pass in a hurry (approximately 12 minutes). It's usually a good idea to destroy an enemy wonder as soon as the first notification goes out, and if you are playing on one of the larger map sizes, it's imperative to launch your major assault with at least 1,500 years left in the game.

If you are defending a wonder, use a lot of towers and walls to create passive defenses. It's almost always a good idea to completely wall yourself in when protecting a wonder, but you may want to place a few buildings outside of your walls for foraging and offensive actions against enemy capitols.

For defense, place your towers in intelligent groupings (multiple towers in close proximity can concentrate massive firepower on the enemy) and place them close to your walls to fend off attackers.

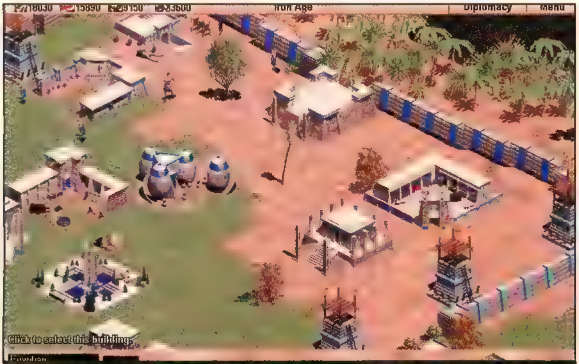
Large fortified walls and towers will force your enemies to divert their resources to large numbers of hand-to-hand forces or siege weapons in order to breach your defenses, and if you plan properly with a mix of heavily armored ranged units, you can pick them off before they beat their way through your walls.

If your resources allow for additional construction or upgrades after you've begun your wonder, upgrade to ballista towers if possible. It is difficult to pull off, but games have been won with just ballista towers and cavalry defending wonders; the ballista towers demolish anything that tries to walk by, and small groups of cavalry can be used as siege weapon strike teams to destroy any catapults attacking your towers. Just be sure you select a civilization that can research ballista towers before you attempt to implement this type of defense.

Though it is one of the few non-combatant units within *Age of Empires*, the priest's ability to convert enemy units to your cause makes it a highly prized defender.

The Power of Persuasion

With the ability to convert enemy forces into friendly units, priests are also a very effective (and sneaky) defense against invading armies. Standing behind a good set of walls, a well-trained priest can easily convert enemy troops and give you forces outside your walls. But certain differences between civilizations can give these units an extra edge. Egypt has a great bonus for priests (+3 range), making them an excellent wonder-defending race. The Choson are also very good because they get reduced-cost priests (allowing you to pump out a ton of priests very quickly).



On any random map, you can be assured that starting resources will be close at hand, but as you build for the future, you'll need to secure safe routes to resources around the map.

Random Games

When selecting a civilization for a randomly generated game, choose a civilization that is suited for the map type since certain civilizations have advantages and disadvantages depending on terrain. For example, the Shang do not get any of the triremes, so they're at a disadvantage in a game with a lot of water. You'll need to experiment to find all of these subtle differences, but it will prove to be worth it.

When exploring a random map, players don't need to venture too far away to get up and running. You can always expect to find at least one berry site within approximately 15 tiles of your starting town center, so you might want to explore enough of the map to find that site before placing your granary down. Other resources have similar generalities that you can always count on.

The random map generator does not always place players on opposite ends of the map; if you are in one corner, that does not necessarily mean that your opponent is in the reciprocal position. So, it's always a good idea to explore early to find out where your opponents' towns are located.

More importantly, understand how the map types are defined: Highland means the map is generated entirely of land or land with a small river cutting through it (the land masses will always be connected by several shallows areas). An inland map will always have some water in it, but will still always have a single, unified land mass (though the number of shallows connections will be fewer than in a Highland map). Coastal maps can have separate continents, so you should always plan on having some method of transporting units across the oceans and use fishing boats as an alternative source of food.

A large island map will have a slim chance of being connected by a shallows bridge, but more often, large islands make up different continents for multiple players. In many instances, players may share an island. Small island maps create different islands for each player and are never connected by shallows or land bridges. As you become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages for each civilization, you'll be more effective on each terrain type.

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Looking to win some money just by playing your favorite games ? Never want to pay for a game again ? Login to HEAT.NET in December and earn degrees that premium members can redeem for the latest games and cool merchandise in HEAT's Black Market store. Luckily, you don't even have to be a Total Annihilation, Quake II or Hexen II God to win – HEAT will be giving away degrees to players of all skill levels – just for playing games.

For those too honorable to accept money (degrees) without blasting an opponent into oblivion, HEAT will also be awarding degrees to the top ranked players on its ladders as well as winners of its frequent events. Furthermore, you'll eventually be able to 'wager' your degrees against other players in games of skill. If you think you're the best at Quake, you'll be able to put your degrees where your mouth is.

December also marks the launch of Net Fighter, the first one-on-one fighting game designed specifically for the Internet, and available exclusively on HEAT.NET. Compete against your buddy down the street or play a total stranger on the other side of the country. Defeat your opponents with over 25 attacks and moves, including special combo maiming and killing maneuvers. And, when you think you're good enough, challenge the best fighters on HEAT ladders and look down on all those losers you've wasted when you're ranked #1! HEAT will also be hosting weekly matches against the developers of Net Fighter. Beat the guys who made the game to win tons of degrees!

HEAT's "Page and Win" events will also continue in December. Throughout the day, a HEAT referee will randomly page a member. If that member is logged on and responds to the page in a reasonable amount of time, he or she will win a small prize and be entered for a chance at one of the grand prizes. HEAT won't reveal the prize amounts, but it's fair to say it will be worth sizable amounts of cash. (In October, HEAT gave away a $2,500 prize in its charter membership drawing).

Don't forget to look for OZYMANDIAS on the network. If you are the first person to page him while he is on HEAT, you'll be rewarded with degrees galore.

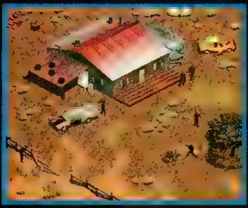
Be sure to look for more "Air Raid" tournaments in December. Occurring throughout the day, HEAT referees will randomly go into lobbies and call for an Air Raid. The result is a spontaneous tournament in which the winners and many of the participants win a number of prizes such as T-shirts, hats and degrees. All in all, HEAT provides lots of opportunities to win and great gaming experiences for playing.

IF GUNS FAIL, BRING IN DOGS.

IF DOGS FAIL, BRING IN TEAR GAS.

IF TEAR GAS FAILS,

BRING IN HELICOPTERS.



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IF HELICOPTERS FAIL,

BRING IN THE NEGOTIATION TEAM.

Readers' Requests

Questions, answers, and helpful advice. What more could a gamer want? We've got everything you need right here!

Now that the big holiday releases are beginning to trickle onto store shelves, the Strategy Central crew is hard at work preparing for their annual rite of passage — next month's Ultimate Strategy Guide. Lucky for them, our readers are on hand to offer some much needed help, with a wealth of tips and cheats for *Jedi Knight*, *NHL 98*, and *Diablo*.

If you're tired of getting cut in half by more experienced Jedi in multi-player games of *Jedi Knight*, try using David Cooper's tips for lightsaber dueling.

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

After waiting patiently nearly two years for the sequel to *Dark Forces*, I wasn't sure what to expect from *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight*, but after playing through the single-player twice (light side and dark side) and running up my phone bill playing the multi-player game, I have to say, LucasArts has done it again.

While I found the single-player game to be an excellent example of level design (gotta love those AT-STs and enormous levels), it didn't take long for me to become completely sucked into the game's multi-player component, and I've developed a few tried-and-true tactics that mix force powers and lightsaber dueling with deadly consequences.

The most important things to remember during multi-player lightsaber battles (I use the lightsaber exclusively) is to always face your opponent — this will allow you to block most, if not all, attacks from blasters and lightsabers — and always stay on the move.

The trick to winning a lightsaber duel is to keep your cool, and know when to strike rather than blindly slashing away at your rivals.

Though you only have four basic attacks — left and right slashes, and an overhead and underhand strike — lightsaber combat is usually very complex. You must watch for the other player to swing first and move in with a strafing movement to make a quick strike on their unguarded side.

If you have taken your opponent by surprise or caught them from the side, use the second fire button to perform a double-swing attack that is almost always fatal (and nearly impossible to block). But for a head-on attack, this tactic leaves you vulnerable for a longer period of time (you have to wait to complete both swings) so use it carefully.

Once you've become accustomed to using a lightsaber, the next step is to combine all that you have learned with your force powers. For example, when I play as the dark side, I'll use force grip to subdue my opponent and rush in for the kill with my lightsaber. When I play on the light side, I'll use blinding and persuasion to completely disorient the victim and before they come to — blammo!

But possibly my favorite thing to do is to use force pull against those poor souls who think they can beat me with a measly blaster. I'll pull the blaster out of their hand then cleave them in half before they know what hit them.

My last tip is to play from the third-person perspective.

It gives me a better view of my opponent and their movements, but in tight corridors, I'll switch to first-person mode to ensure I can block every swing.

—**David Cooper**, *via the Internet*

Thanks for the great tips David, but we have to warn you we've been practicing our own brand of Jedi training here at the PC Gamer *offices (Gary's patented Force Noogie is to be feared) and all our favorite tricks will be revealed in next month's issue. Stay tuned.*

Cheater's Corner

JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II

Tired of getting blasted by those nasty Tusken Raiders? Use these handy cheats I've found to get through *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight*. Enjoy!

— **Victor Stapleton,**
via the Internet

……

[illegible] For those cheats that can be turned on or off (marked by an "*") the word 'on' or 'off' must follow the cheat. To activate a cheat hit the "T" key to enable the command console and type the code.

[illegible] — jediwannabe *
Full Health — bactame
All Weapons — red5
All Items — [illegible]mprat
Reveal Entire Map — 5858lv[illegible]
Light Master — [illegible]mayoda
Dark Master — sithlord
Full Mana — [illegible]dajammies
Skip to the next level — thereisn[illegible]
Fly Mode — eriamjh *
[illegible] AI — whiteflag *
[illegible] — slowmo *

Diablo

I have found the best and easiest, not to mention fastest way to make money in *Diablo*. You only need about 75 gold and some potions on your belt.

First, drop your money then take a few steps away and click on the money. Move your cursor down to a potion on your belt before your character takes the gold — any potion will do. Click on the potion at the same time your character takes the money.

READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

The description of the potion will

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you for The Tip of the Month Club.

Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

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***OR* editor@pcgamer.com**

have changed to the amount of gold you dropped. Now drop the potion for it to turn into gold. This also works with any item in the game. This trick may take a few tries, but its well worth the effort. I made 45,000 gold in 15 minutes. The best place to use this trick is near the witch's hut so you can buy more potions if you run out! I have also discovered that this trick works on battle.net and the newest version of the game will NOT destroy the duplicated gold!

— Zachary Kantola, *via the Internet*

Thanks for the cheat Zachary, we were getting a little short on cash. For some reason, that peg-leg kid keeps offering us stuff that costs a fortune! You're our gaming genius this month, so look for some goodies to be coming your way soon! **PCG**

Cheater's Corner

NHL 98

The coolest game on ice is now even cooler thanks to these bizarre cheats!

……

If you think EA's fifth season of action-packed hockey is a little too demanding for your tastes, here are a few cheat codes that will even the playing field or provide a few laughs. To activate, simply type one of the cheats during the game.

HOMEGOAL – Automatically scores goal for the home team.
AWAYGOAL – Automatically scores goal for the away team.
PENALTY – Force a penalty.
INJURY – Force an injury.
ZAMBO – Brings the zamboni onto the ice during a game.
SPOTS – Turns on the arena spotlights.
FLASH – Enables camera flashes from the stands.
VICTORY – Watch fireworks go off above the ice.
MANTIS – Stretches the players into 10 foot tall giants.
NHLKIDS – Try it and see!
GRAB – Players will stick-hold opposing players on contact.
CHECK – Players will automatically check opposing players on contact.
STANLEY – Shows the Stanley Cup victory video.

If you're strapped for cash in *Diablo*, use Zach's handy cheat, and you'll be wading in treasure.

"Impenetrable" is not in his very limited vocabulary.
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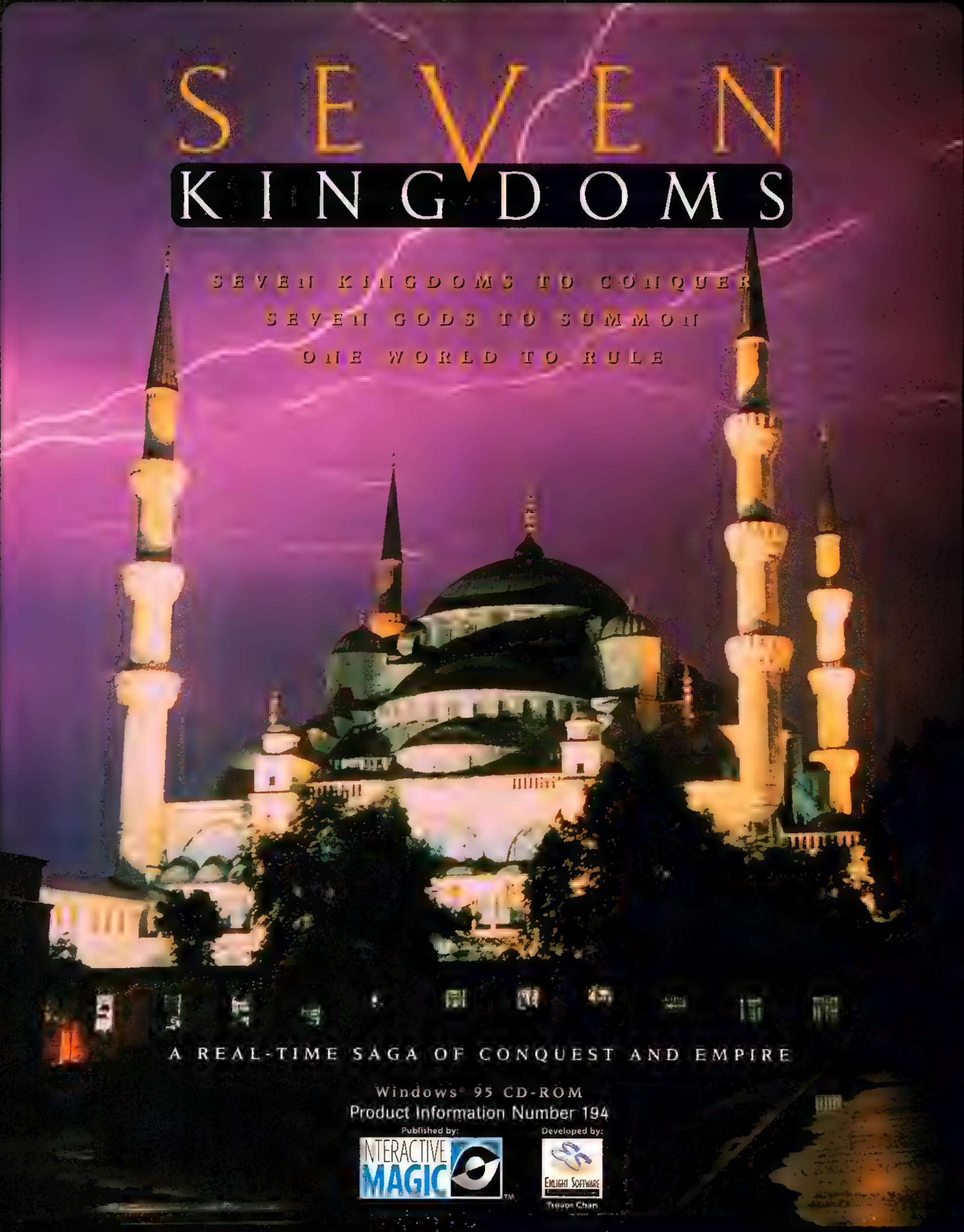
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Well, the 1997 holiday season is finally upon us, bringing all manner of exciting new games and cutting edge hardware to the world of PC gaming. And we have just one question for you, our valued readers: Where are all the cards? Huh? You sent your Uncle Clancy one, and *he* talks to the sofa. Don't you love us any more? It's not too late to save our holidays, so get on the stick!

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or E-mail to:
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www.pcgamer.com

Our Own Space

This is in regards to the column "Worlds Without End" written by Jason Bates in your September issue, which refers to how games should use the actual scientific data on our galaxy and the stars around us instead of the fictional reductions we are always subjected to.

The space combat/trade game *Frontier Elite* hinted at how good this could be, and I strongly feel the time is perfect to do more of this type of game, especially with the advent of 3D-accelerated games. I'm very pleased to see this idea is catching on, and am eager to see it manifested in future games. Believe me, I will certainly buy any game where I can pilot a ship throughout *our* galaxy.

— Lydian Kev, *via AOL*

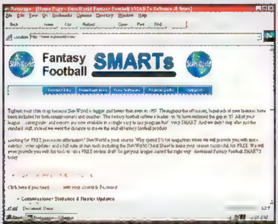
Bad Move

I told my girlfriend that computer games are better than sex. Now she won't talk to me. What should I do?

— Jim Manson, *via AOL*

You may be beyond help, Jim, but we'd suggest you get a new girlfriend. And some common sense.

Football Fantasy



Inspired by *Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football*, a savvy reader did some web-surfing and found what he says is an even better system.

Last year, I decided to move my Fantasy Football league into the 1990s and get some software to help process the stats for the teams. Taking *PC Gamer's* advice, I purchased *Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football* by Fantasy Sports Properties. I was impressed. This year I decided to look around a bit more, and I found an even better program. I happened to go to *www.statsworld.com* and try their free software. I was totally blown away! This software, by far, blows away any of the other free demos that I have tried this year. It allows for salary caps, injury reports, Commissioner comments, statistical breakdowns, analysis...the list goes on. (While this letter might sound like I'm employed with this company, I'm not.)

Please give these "saviors of the Fantasy Football world" a tip of the hat!

— Glen Ewing, *via the Internet*

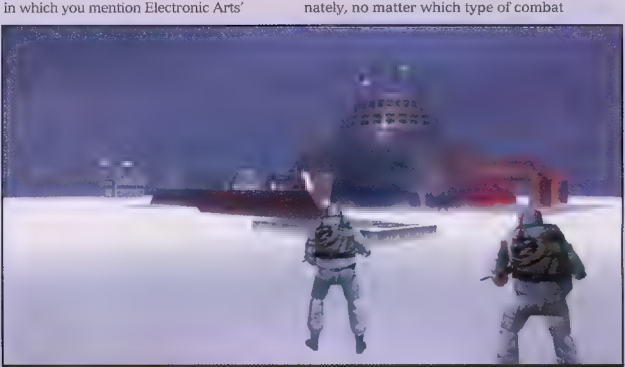
Seal's Fate

I am writing in regard to your "Ultimate Preview" section of the September issue in which you mention Electronic Arts' *Seal Team* in the preview of Zombie's *Spec Ops: U.S. Army Rangers*. In speaking of the potential pitfalls of the game, you refer to the "grim theme" and the "realistic depictions of humans killing humans." And you go on to ask, "Anyone remember *Seal Team*? We didn't think so."

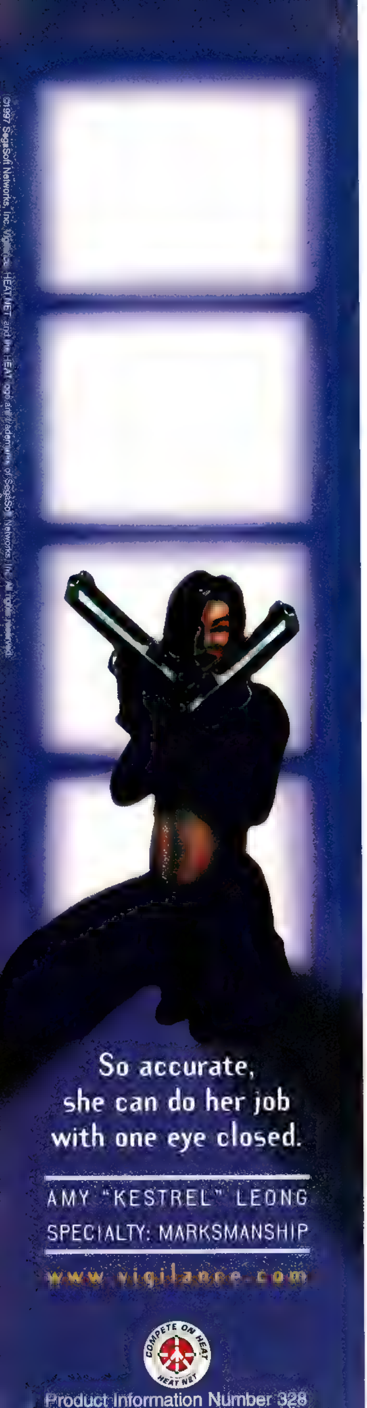
Well, I am someone who does remember it and still enjoys playing it. And some others must also remember, because Jane's is contemplating doing an updated version and has asked for suggestions, as reported by other magazines.

Seal Team did what I believe is probably the most difficult thing to accomplish in any computer simulation; that is to simulate combat — more specifically, ground combat — in its most personal and intimate form. No fancy flight models and physics. No smart weapons and precision-guided munitions.

The idea that this type of simulation has a "grim theme" that may turn off action and sim gamers doesn't hold water. The basic idea remains the same as in any other combat simulation — the guy on the other end of the bullet, bomb, missile, or torpedo is at best wounded and most likely dead. Fortunately, no matter which type of combat



For the time being, at least, Zombie's *Spec Ops: U.S. Army Rangers* is as close as gamers will come to an updated version of EA's classic *Seal Team* — rumors of a new version of that game were premature.



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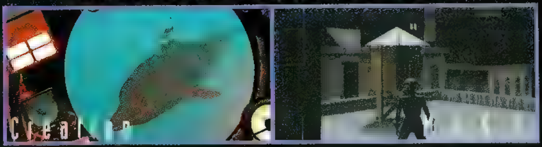
What ever happened to...



Bullfrog Mystery

Remember far back in the mists of time (college distorts my perception of reality a little) when you put a frog on your cover? The games featured in that section were from a company named Bullfrog, who has lots of gaming chops, to be sure. They've certainly proven themselves to be one of the great game designing companies out there. However, where are some of the games featured in that issue? *Dungeon Keeper* took four billion years (there's that slight perception problem again) to come out! I dare say, as far as roleplaying games go, or at least games with fantasy elements, this game was in limbo almost as long as *StoneKeep*! Granted, the finished product of *Dungeon Keeper* is a lot better than that flop, but still! What about *Creation*? I remember reading about the AI of the sea creatures, how they moved and acted realistically in large groups and such, and how intricately detailed the landscape was. I can't even find the product on their web site! And what about *The Indestructibles*? What happened to this company? I know that Peter Molyneux left them, but if the games had been in development so long, there must be something to show for it, and they surely could get along without him. What's up, Bullfrog?

— **Ish Vicens**, *via the Internet*

PC GAMER
Exclusive!
The New Bullfrog

Good questions, Ish. Of the upcoming Bullfrog games we covered way back in our June 1995 issue, Magic Carpet II, Syndicate Wars, Theme Hospital, *and* Dungeon Keeper *have been released.* Biosphere *came out, too, but by that time it was known as* Gene Wars. *That just leaves the ones you asked about —* Creation *and* The Indestructibles *— neither of which were on display at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta this summer. The official word from Electronic Arts, Bullfrog's parent company, is that* Creation *is off for the time being, "mainly because the market is crowded with underwater games."* The Indestructibles, *once known by the tentative title* M.I.S.T. *(for* My Incredible Super Team*), is still in development. It's currently on hold, says EA, but the plan is to start production on it soon. Meanwhile, work on* Populous 3 *continues as we go to press.*

is simulated, it is just that: simulated.

So, yes, *Seal Team* is remembered; and very fondly, I might add. My best friend and I, both U.S. Army veterans, cut our simulation teeth on *Seal Team* when it first came out. We love it to this day and anxiously await Zombie's *Spec Ops: U.S. Army Rangers* as well as Jane's updated version of *Seal Team*. There is no greater challenge than going against your enemy with little more than your own wits and strategy and seeing which is the better soldier. For those of us who enjoy strategy/wargames and combat simulations, games such as *Seal Team* enable us to experience this without actually having to go in harm's way.

Finally, continue the great work which has kept your publication so informative and enjoyable. I'll be looking forward to coverage of the new *Seal Team* sim if it becomes a reality.

— **Scott Davey**, *via the Internet*

We loved Seal Team, *too, Scott, and we'd love to see an update from Jane's Combat Simulations; we've even pestered Jane's about it a few times. But the official word from Electronic Arts is that Jane's isn't seriously considering a new version of the game. Apparently, a product manager at Jane's posted a message on the Internet asking what gamers would like to see in a new* Seal Team, *which led to speculation that the game was in the works — but as we go to press, it's not on EA's schedule.*

Correction

Edwin Herrell was, in fact, not the Lead Programmer or technical designer for *Privateer* as was stated in your *Ares Rising* news story in the October issue. While Edwin made enormous contributions, and the game would not have come out without his efforts, he did not hold the title of lead programmer or the responsibility of the technical design, both of which were mine.

— **Ed Maurer**, *via the Internet*

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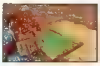
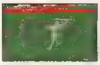
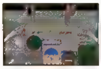
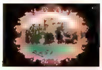
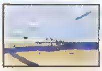
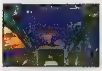
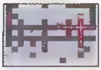
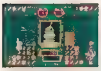
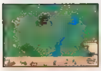
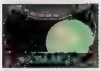
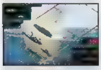
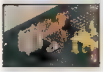
THE PC GAMER
GAMES
REVIEWS INDEX

It's that time of year again — a time for singing festive songs, drinking festive drinks, and reading every page of the *PC Gamer* Reviews Index. Yes, in this easy-to-digest formula, you'll find every review we did this year, including the reviews from our newly incorporated Hard Stuff section. For the hardware part of the index, turn to page 436. For the lowdown on all the games we reviewed, you can start right here, right now!

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
3D Ultra Mini-Golf 	August '97 p. 123	Arcade	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Nice production values. True Putt option makes things interesting.	Annoying viewing angles; limited replay value.	For real putt-putt excitement, take a pass on this, load up the car and head for the mini-golf course.	47%	
3DO Games: Decathlon 	June '97 p. 118	Arcade	Studio 3DO, 600 Galveston Drive, Redwood City, CA 94063 (800) 336-3506	Beautifully animated players, network compatible.	Sterile presentation, cramping fingers from button mashing.	While it may look good, this game suffers from a lack of excitement; not worth the finger cramps.	60%	
688[i] Hunter/Killer	September '97 p. 164	Simulation	Jane's Combat Sims, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Detailed; great sound effects; a good mission editor; some multiplayer support.	May be too complex; unimpressive 3D view; videos occasionally don't match performance.	A great submarine sim, but only hard-core sim nuts should apply.	85%	
A Fork in the Tale	May '97 p.129	Interactive Movie	AnyRiver, 280 Utah Avenue, South San Francisco, CA 94080 (415) 742-7932	Lots of great comedy from Rob Schneider; fast-moving, lag-free video.	Tedious, uninteresting story; banal gameplay; frustrating repetition.	Think FMV sucks? You'll think it again.	34%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
A-10 Cuba! 	March '97 p. 160	Simulation	Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., #1000, Los Angeles,CA 90025 (310) 473-9200	Detailed and frisky flight model; outstanding sound; smooth, simple graphics.	Somewhat irksome controls; no printed manual; only 12 missions.	An immersive but very limited flight sim that thrives in the Win95 environment.	68%	
Admiral: Sea Battles 	February '97 p. 164	Strategy	Megamedia Corp., 47381 Bayside Parkway, Fremont, CA 94539 (510) 623-1100	Great graphics, intense action, challenging scenarios.	The manual needs to be in real English; some awkward design elements cause irritation.	A tight, clean, unpretentious little game that could become a classic.	80%	
Age of Sail	March '97 p.141	Wargame	TalonSoft, P.O. Box 632, Forest Hill, MD 21050-0632 (410) 933-9191	Huge number of scenarios; solid campaign mode; excellent battle-editor.	Controlling big engagements too often means zooming out and missing some of the fun.	A sumptuous looking, smooth-playing recreation of a fascinating era.	85%	
Agile Warrior F-111X 	May '97 p. 116	Shooter	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (714) 883-8710	Numerous missions to accomplish; lots of ammunition to play with.	Bland landscapes; jerky control; targets difficult to find.	Even die-hard shooter fans will find this insipid and uninspired.	40%	
Alien Incident	February '97 p. 129	Adventure	Gametek, Inc., 3 Harbor Drive, Suite 110, Sausalito, CA 94965 (800) GAMETEK	Colorful graphics, good writing, and a solid game at the core.	Flaky sound drivers, some setup troubles, no in-game voice acting.	A good choice for adventure gaming beginners, or something to take out when the kids come over.	73%	
Amber	May '97 p. 133	Puzzle	Changeling, 2507 Albata Avenue, Austin, TX 78757-2102 (512) 419-7085	A promising opening; nice rendered graphics.	Illogical puzzles; mostly static backgrounds; very small amount of gameplay.	*Amber* falls more than a few steps short of achieving its potential.	53%	
Amok	May '97 p. 125	Shooter	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (212) 679-6850	Fast, frenetic action; it runs from the CD!	Frustratingly difficult; stingy password allotment; no mouse or joystick support.	Although it won't win any prizes, *Amok* is a decent, but somewhat dated and repetitious, shooter.	65%	
Archimedean Dynasty 	March '97 p.138	Action/Adventure	Blue Byte Software, 870 Giggins Rd., #143, Shaumburg, IL 60173 (847) 995-9951	Great graphics; sophisticated combat engine; plenty of strategy; involving story line.	May run slow on older machines, gameplay is fairly linear, and there are no multi-player options.	This intriguing sub combat game will please action lovers everywhere.	84%	
Area 51	February '97 p. 167	Shooter	Midway/GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (212) 679-6850	Lots of enemies to kill. Loads of ammo, power-ups, and aliens.	Grainy graphics, sluggish pace, one-dimensional gameplay.	Unless you adored the arcade version and can overlook some glaring flaws, don't bother.	58%	
Arrival, The	June '97 p. 80	Adventure	Live Interactive, 15400 Sherman Way, P.O. Box 10124, Van Nuys, CA 91410 (818) 988-5060	Outstanding graphics and sound, eerie and atmospheric.	Some puzzles too easy; moderate amount of CD swapping.	An engaging adventure despite the simplistic puzzles.	81%	
Ashes to Ashes	February '97 p. 145	First-person shooter	Corel Corp., 1600 Carling Ave., Ottawa, Ont., Cananda K1Z8R7 (800) 772-6735	Attractive graphics, multiple vehicles, and interesting outdoor environments.	Disorienting, confusing. Uninspired.	There's no reason to recommend this. It's bland, confusing, and tiresome.	25%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Assassin 2015	January '97 p. 236	Action	Inscape, P.O. Box 251829, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (800) 741-3043	Adrienne Barbeau's husky voice-overs are nicely done.	The game is very short, not very challenging, and, aside from the cut-scenes, looks very dated.	*Assassin* seems to miss the point of what first-person shootin' fun is all about.	35%	
Atlantis: The Lost Tales	November '97 p.291	Adventure	Cryo, 1592 Union St., #155, San Francisco, CA 94123 (800) 468-3772	Stunning scenes; gameplay is reasonably entertaining; good variety.	Same old puzzles. Same old pop-up dialog boxes. 3D character movements are jerky and unbelievable.	It's a standard graphic adventure that will only do in a pinch.	62%	
Atomic Bomberman 	October '97 p. 210	Arcade	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-GAME	Fast-paced action; multi-play for up to ten players; entertaining time killer.	Takes up way too much hard-drive space; no advancement system; ugly playing boards.	Good clean fun for you and your buddies — if you've got the hard-drive space to spare.	75%	
Azrael's Tear	February '97 p.160	Adventure	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900	Beautiful in high-res; interesting plot-line; well-developed characters.	Runs poorly even on high-end machines; lots of hunting for yet another key.	A good graphic adventure with lots to explore, but you need a powerful PC.	82%	
Baku Baku 	January '97 p.251	Puzzle	Sega Entertainment, P.O. Box 8097, Redwood City, CA 94063 (510) 371-3131	Nicely rendered animals; great two-player mode; extra strategy makes it stand out.	May be too "cute" for some; PC conversion loses a little in the translation.	Despite its full-screen failings, *Baku Baku* is a puzzle game not to be missed.	83%	
Baldies 	April '97 p.112	Strategy	Panasonic Interactive, 4701 Patrick Henry Dr., Ste. 1101, Santa Clara, CA 95054 (408) 653-1898	Cute. A new twist.	Much of the game relies on luck. You have little control over the baldies, which is very frustrating.	A great attempt at making something fresh and funny, but it falls flat after the first few levels.	55%	
Banzai Bug	May '97 p.134	Action	Grolier Interactive Inc., 90 Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816 (800) 356-5590	Lots of originality; good graphics and sound; cute touches throughout game.	Flawed basic design; often frustrating to play; technically spartan.	A promising title that didn't quite live up to its potential.	56%	
Battlecruiser 3000 AD 	January '97 p.208	Strategy	Take 2 Interactive, 1004 Ligonier St., Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 472-2000	The intro animation is very cool.	Annoying bugs; frequent crashes; features that don't work; a pathetically inadequate manual.	This game simply wasn't finished when it shipped. Maybe Take 2 can still fix it. Until then, don't buy it.	15%	
Battleship 	March '97 p.110	Strategy	Hasbro Interactive, 50 Dunham Road, Beverly, MA 01915 (617) 746-2903	Hey, it's *Battleship* — with snazzy cutscenes and great multiplayer support.	The cutscenes refuse to go away; there's no option for turn-based combat during the scenario modes.	A pretty good port of a classic.	78%	
Battlesport	August '97 p. 127	Action	Acclaim Entertainment, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 656-5000	The name is kinda nice.	Ancient graphics, lackluster gameplay, and shoddy controls deal a triple dose of death on this clunker.	Simply terrible. Trust us on this one — you'll want to avoid it at all costs.	20%	
Bedlam 	January '97 p. 225	Action	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (212) 679-6850	Easy to control, lots of explosions.	No multi-player mode, questionable level design, tedious switch-hunts, enemies too easy to kill.	A reasonably workmanlike effort with some drawbacks.	68%	

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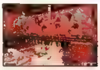
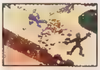
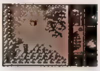
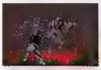
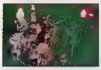
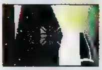
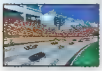
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Betrayal in Antara	October '97 p. 214	Roleplaying	Sierra Online, 3380 146th Place, S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Engrossing story line; tried-and-true interface; huge game world.	Traveling becomes repetitive; interface needs streamlining; lack of a professional writer's touch.	If you liked *Krondor*, buy this game. It's deep, it's engrossing, and it's fun.	81%	
Blood 	July '97 p. 208	First-person shooter	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (800) 305-3390	Good fun; lots of dark humor; simply awesome Deathmatches.	Very difficult. Doesn't feel quite as 'solid' as *Duke*.	An excellent implementation of the BUILD engine that makes for a truly wicked shoot-'em-up.	85%	
Blood & Magic	March '97 p.118	Strategy	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine CA 92714 (800) 969-GAME	Lots of terrain variety, good graphics (for VGA), great single-player game.	Flat sound effects, constantly clicking on basal golems.	It's not just another *WarCraft*; *Blood & Magic* has some interesting, new ideas.	83%	
Bug!	January '97 p. 259	Arcade	Sega Entertainment, P.O. Box 8097, Redwood City, CA 94063 (510) 371-3131	Cute characters; solid control.	The game itself is incredibly dry and uninspired. Not Sega's best title to choose to port over to the PC.	Unless you're a die-hard platform freak, stay away from *Bug!*	44%	
British Open Champ. Golf	July '97 p. 204	Sports	Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 616-2022	Easy to get into, tremendous atmosphere; gorgeous graphics; good commentary.	Only two courses; lack of Internet options is a real bummer.	The tournament setting, presentation, and ease-of-use makes this a winner.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Callahan's Crosstime Saloon	May '97 p. 139	Adventure	Take 2 Interactive, 1004 Ligonier St., Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 474-2000	There are some genuinely funny jokes. Gameplay is just right; not too easy or hard.	There are some genuinely unfunny jokes. Some puzzles were pointless.	A traditional adventure game with a good story, funny bits, and decent puzzles.	86%	
Captain Quazar 	February '97 p. 141	Arcade	Studio 3DO, 600 Galveston Dr., Redwood City, CA 94063 (800) 336-3506	It's easy to set up and start playing.	No fun, plenty of annoying faults.	Half-hearted arcade dross to be avoided.	19%	
Carmageddon	October '97 p.211	Racing/Action	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-GAME	Guts and gore! Very playable and addictive.	An unfinished feel; feeble graphics engine; too many minor nags.	A fun game, but rough around the edges; technologically inferior to other action racing games out there.	78%	
Cave Wars 	March '97 p. 162	Strategy	Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 (410) 254-9200	A novel concept, with a multi-tiered world and bizarre subterranean milieu.	A lack of update screens, diplomacy, interaction, custom options, tactical combat.	Bare bones strategic gaming with few frills; fresh ideas but poor execution.	75%	
Circle of Blood	January '97 p. 234	Adventure	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine CA, 92714 (800) 874-4607	Simple interface; beautiful, crisp graphics; challenging puzzles; intriguing story line.	Voice acting isn't exactly professional; some puzzles require too much pixel-hunting.	It's entertaining, challenging, and worth playing, but it's not an adventure that will blow you away.	80%	
Circuit Racer	November '97 p. 230	Arcade	WizardWorks, 2300 Berkshire Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55441 (612) 559-5301	Runs on low-end systems; only takes up 7MB.	Blah, circa-1995 graphics; no convincing sense of speed; unrefined gameplay.	You can do a lot better than this — unless you have an older system, there are no reasons to bother.	58%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
City of Lost Children, The	July '97 p. 194	Adventure	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-8000	The graphics are sensational; dark mood.	Incredibly short playing time; pointless puzzles; Euro-crap interface.	Rent the cult movie instead; it'll blow your mind. The game will just blow your temper.	48%	
Clandestiny	March '97 p. 157	Puzzle	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 874-4607	Nice rendering, and there's a hidden book with some good Scottish recipes.	Cheesy animation, bad dialog, lame-o puzzles.	If tired puzzlers ye buy, best give it a try. If ye're nae inta it, ye'd best let it sit.	30%	
Comanche 3	July '97 p. 148	Simulation	NovaLogic, 18510 Ventura Blvd., Suite 200, Tarzana, CA 91356 (818) 744-0600	Overall fun gameplay and sharp graphics engine.	Idiot wingman, small game world, dippy AI in general.	A fun, good-looking game that will keep you playing — just don't expect *Longbow*-level sim quality.	78%	
Crush! Deluxe	November '97 p. 250	Strategy	MegaMedia, 47381 Bayside Parkway, Fremont, CA 94538 (800) MEGAMEDIA	Unique, turn-based style of play; multi-player mode can be entertaining.	Bore-o-rama graphics and sound; the higher math can get tedious.	A mediocre thinking-man's game of blood, sweat, and tears.	58%	
Crow: City of Angels, The	July '97 p. 205	Fighting	Acclaim, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (800) 759-7800	Lovely backgrounds. Lasts longer than the movie.	Bad audio, bad control, bad movie. The Crow walks funny.	The worst movie license fighting game since *Expect No Mercy.*	32%	
Crystal Skull, The	February '97 p. 172	Multimedia Adventure	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596-3572 (800) 336-2947	A few okay puzzles; some of the acting is good for its unintentional comedic value.	Mostly puzzles; less-than-great graphics.	If you want a Multimedia Aztec Adventure, try *Inca* instead. If you want a good adventure, go buy *The Beast Within.*	33%	
CyberGladiators 	February '97 p. 117	Arcade	Sierra Online, 3380 146th Place, S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Attractive graphics; smooth animations; intuitive controls.	Minimal story line or options; uninspired, angular characters.	*CyberGladiators* is a real arcade-style fighter for the PC that's more than capable of standing up to a fight.	80%	
D.A. Pursuit of Justice	August '97 p. 124	Adventure	Legacy Software, 5340 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066 (310) 823-2423	Interesting and original; and even educational.	Short lifespan, game procedures can be repetitive and frustrating.	A game of limited appeal, but armchair attorneys willing to do their homework will find it interesting.	70%	
Dark Colony 	November '97 p. 235	Strategy	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529	Good graphics and mix of units; the chance to play the "Grays."	Not too original; almost identical units for both sides. Simple AI.	Even though it doesn't improve on the real-time strategy genre, it's an enjoyable sci-fi romp.	79%	
Darklight Conflict 	July '97 p. 158	Action	Electronic Arts, P.O. Box 7578, San Mateo, CA 94403-7578 (415) 513-7171	Gorgeous graphics, impressive effects and challenging missions.	No modem or TCP/IP options; poor control and limited joystick support; difficult missions.	A beautiful and challenging alternative to cinematic space combat games.	80%	
Daytona USA 	February '97 p. 171	Arcade	Sega Entertainment, P.O. Box 8097, Redwood City, CA 94063 (888) SEGA-SALES	Realistic driving physics; smooth graphics.	Choppy frame-rate; limited number of cars and tracks; port could have been done much better.	*Daytona USA* is a solid, if limited, racing experience.	67%	

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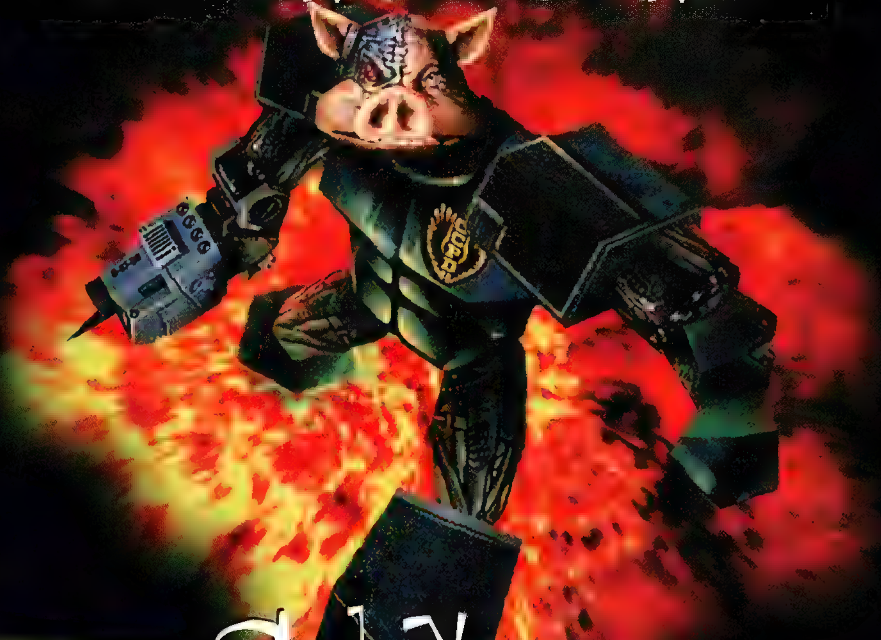
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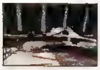
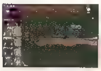
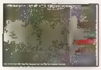
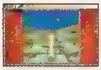
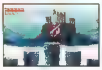
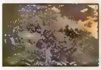
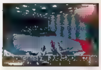
Product Information Number 128

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Deadly Tide 	January '97 p. 260	Arcade	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 637-9308	Damn fine graphics, a semi-playable 360-degree shooting mode, and plenty of cool rendered bubbles.	Too bad it's still a cookie-cutter rail-shooter.	Gets real boring, real fast. The *Waterworld* of gaming.	60%	
Death Rally 	February '97 p. 142	Arcade	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (800) 434-2637	Beautiful graphics; fast racing action; it's fun playing dirty.	No race map; merely average computer opponents.	You can take revenge on bad drivers in this fun racer (without all those nasty legal consequences).	84%	
DeathDrome 	April '97 p. 130	Action	Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 (800) 469-2539	Runs fast, looks good, and it can be fun.	Once you figure out how to exploit a glaring design flaw, it's far too easy.	With a little more care and attention paid to gameplay, *DeathDrome* could have been a lot better.	68%	
Decisive Battles of WWI: Ardennes 	October '97 p. 258	Wargame	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (800) 601-7529	Surprisingly good AI. Good replication of classic tabletop wargames.	Some questionable victory requirements. Retro design (which some will consider a "High").	Sure, it's just another Bulge game, but it's a very good one.	83%	
Destiny 	January '97 p. 242	Strategy	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	Strategic level play has great detail and epic sweep.	Tactical combat and 3D modes just don't work; discovery system is poorly explained.	An admirable contender, but it won't replace *Civilization* in the hearts of many gamers.	75%	
Destruction Derby 2 	March '97 p. 124	Arcade	Psygnosis/Sony, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683	Sensational graphics, bone-breaking action; about as subtle as a shower of anvils.	Hardware requirements are steep if you want maximum performance.	If you liked the original, you'll love this sequel.	86%	
Deus 	April '97 p. 137	Adventure	ReadySoft, 2221 Yonge St., Suite 400, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4S24B (416) 322-7350	Immersive sound; two play modes; an improvement over its predecessor.	Irritations still outweigh any enjoyment you might find.	Interesting ideas are sabotaged by poor implementation and dated design.	58%	
Diablo 	March '97 p. 102	Adventure	Blizzard Entertainment, P.O. Box 18077, Irvine CA 92713 (714) 953-7669	Beautiful scenery; stream-lined interface; multiplayer support.	Load times long for slow PCs; quests are linear when you get them; limited options with ranged weapons.	RPG fans have waited for this one for a long time, and they won't be disappointed.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Die Hard Trilogy 	June '97 p. 82	Arcade	Fox Interactive, P.O. Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213 (310) 369-5369	Successfully captures the Die Hard spirit in three different, enjoyable game styles.	High system requirements, somewhat sluggish controls, gets a bit repetitive.	Great value for your gaming dollar, provided you have the horsepower.	84%	
Discworld II: Mortality Bytes 	April '97 p. 102	Adventure	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794	Terrific animation, great music, and a huge story to work your way through.	Too much pointless dialog, working knowledge of Discworld books required.	*Discworld* fans will have fun, but everyone else will simply be confused.	73%	
Dragon Dice 	November '97 p. 303	Strategy	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263	A good way to learn *Dragon Dice.* You can get dice combos without spending tons of money.	It's difficult to track the number and movements of your units. Lack of useful information.	It's a good learning tool, but the tabletop version is a deeper strategy game.	55%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Dragonheart: Fire and Steel 	April '97 p. 113	Arcade	Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800	Them dragons are good eatin'.	Clumsy controls, repetitive gameplay, and chunky graphics. A terrible use of a good movie license.	It's pointless and it has little to do with the movie. Don't bother.	25%	
Drowned God	February '97 p. 110	Puzzle	Inscape, P.O. Box 251829, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (800) 741-3043	Visually sumptuous and atmospheric, with interesting conspiratorial content.	Many familiar and frustrating puzzles, with almost as many bugs and frequent dead ends.	A fair twiddleware game that's undermined by bugs and mediocre gameplay.	69%	
Dungeon Keeper	September '97 p. 142	Strategy	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 513-7171	Highly addictive, lots of subtle detail, and very attractive graphics.	Slow pace in multi-player battles; no built-in Internet support.	The line on the box is right; Evil is good.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Ecstatica II	September '97 p. 170	Action/Adventure	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683	Excellent graphics; lots of gameplay.	No joystick support; incredibly difficult and repetitive.	Despite its flaws, it's more than the sum of its parts, delivering hours of challenging gameplay.	82%	
Emperor of the Fading Suns	May '97 p. 138	Strategy	SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400	It's epic in scale, atmospheric, and full of extremely deep gameplay.	Inadequate manual; stratospheric learning curve; solo play becomes a real trudge.	A lot of people are going to love this game; we didn't — but we respect it greatly.	75%	
Enemy Nations 	August '97 p. 110	Strategy	Head Games, P.O. Box 2698, Reston, VA (612) 321-9470	Solid core gameplay; good balance of elements; lots of replay value.	Gameplay glitches; poor memory management. Needs better way of presenting resource information.	Entertaining; just the right blalance of construction, research, resources, and combat.	86%	
Eradicator 	January '97 p. 212	Action	Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Boulevard, #500, San Jose, CA 95129 (800) 245-7744	PIP; new enemies to kill; a few good weapons.	A few bad weapons; aggravating levels; repetitive, uninspired music.	It's a decent shoot-'em-up, but *Eradicator* needed to do more to take on *Quake* or *Duke* on their home turf.	78%	
Extreme Assault	October '97 p. 224	Arcade	Blue Byte, 33 S. Roselle Rd., Suite 201, Schaumburg, IL 60193 (847) 534-7950	Incredible graphics; fast action; slick presentation.	Complex control mode is a pain to master; steep difficulty curve.	It looks great, and sometimes plays great, but the fiddly control is an obstacle for the average gamer.	68%	
Extreme Chess	April '97 p. 131	Chess	Davidson/Simon & Schuster,19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600	Powerful chess engine; many classic games; strong analysis and annotation features.	Poor documentation; occasionally awkward and confusing interface; no Internet play.	This is the chess game for serious chess players. It may help improve your game.	91%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
F/A-18 Hornet 3.0	July '97 p.167	Flight Simulation	Graphic Simulations Corp., 15400 Knoll Trail #104, Dallas, TX 75248 (972) 386-7575	Authentically modeled aircraft and systems. Smooth frame rates.	No real campaign; not enough missions (or an editor); kinda tough for beginners.	A realistic simulation that's also fun to fly once you get the hang of it.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Fable	July '97 p. 190	Adventure	Sir-Tech, Ogdensburg Business Center, P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY13669 (315) 393-6633	Gorgeous backgrounds; good voice-acting; straight-forward puzzles.	Mediocre writing; clunky inventory; difficulty level is low. Allegedly "improved" ending is lame.	Beautiful production but only modestly challenging, or interesting, gameplay.	68%	

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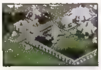
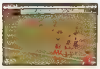
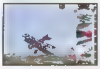
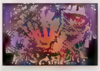
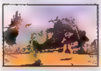
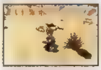
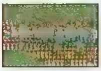
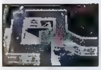
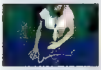
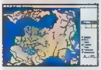
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Fallen Haven 	June '97 p. 113	Strategy	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 3491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	A simple approach that allows for quick play.	Too few units. High unit expendability in a turn-based game doesn't really work. No multi-player.	A fair bet if you want some quick gameplay, but it could use some refinements.	79%	
FIFA Soccer 97 	March '97 p.152	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Authentic, fun gameplay; exquisite presentation.	Players occasionally behave erratically; tournament modes could be better defined.	*FIFA 97* is a great leap forward for PC soccer games, and terrific entertainment in its own right.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Flying Corps 	May '97 p. 120	Simulation	Empire, 13220 Wisteria Dr., Bay N-2, Germantown MD 20874 (310) 916-9303	Visually gorgeous and full game world. Detailed flight model; strong gameplay.	Useless Win95 mode; screwy keyboard layout and viewing options; joystick problems.	A flawed gem, but a gem nonetheless. A wonderful sim with an authentic feel.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Formula 1 	September '97 p. 190	Racing	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794	Pretty; 30fps with 3Dfx even on a P90; lots of tracks, teams, drivers.	Driving engine is terribly unrealistic; only supports four accelerator cards; no multi-player functions.	It's fun for a bit, but the lack of replayabilitiy will disappoint many die-hard fans.	60%	
FPS Football Pro '97 	April '97 p. 116	Sports	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	The original design is there; you won't find a better way to make leagues and plays.	Dubious multi-player action; numerous bugs; Windows screen clutter, DOS hang-overs.	You'd be better off with an earlier DOS version of the game.	65%	
Fragile Allegiance 	July '97 p. 176	Strategy	Interplay,16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-PLAY	Nice production; good ideas (taken from other games).	Familiar themes; boring gameplay; repetitive; too much screen-hopping.	A competently programmed yawn with limited replay value.	60%	
Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '98 	September '97 p. 174	Sports	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Incredible depth; statistical accuracy; totally customizable; loads of play options.	Sterile, unexciting gameplay; primitive graphics; no sense of "being there."	Achieves what it sets out to do, but baseball has never looked less inviting.	60%	
Front Page Sports: Golf 	August '97 p. 114	Sports	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	TrueSwing is intuitive and realistic; fun, tough courses; realistic ball movement.	TrueSwing is tough to learn; pointless player commentary.	The truly revolutionary swing style makes *FPS: Golf* intuitive and fun.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Full Tilt! 2 Pinball 	March '97 p. 149	Arcade	Maxis, 2121 North California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 33-MAXIS	Great graphics and sound; many clever enhancements over the original game.	We wish it came with five or six tables, instead of three.	No pinball addict should miss *Full Tilt 2!*	84%	
FX Fighter Turbo 	March '97 p. 105	3D Fighter	GTE, 2035 Corte Del Nogal, Suite 200, Carlsbad, CA 92009 (800) GTE-TODAY	It's more of the same for *FX Fighter* fans; the network play is a plus.	Inferior graphics; little innovation; and clumsy controls.	If you must have network play, you might as well buy this, but there are plenty of other, better 3D fighters.	47%	
G-Nome 	May '97 p. 116	Action	7th Level, P.O. 832190, Richardson, TX 75083-2190 (800) 884-8863	Pretty graphics; the ability to eject and enter enemy 'bots and buildings adds variety.	Choppy animation; sluggish control; inadequate manual.	*G-Nome* had the goods to be a hit, but poor execution makes it a disappointment.	68%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Gex	April '97 p. 141	Arcade	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 882-8080	A few interesting additions to the genre, and you can turn off Gex's voice!	So-so graphics; not all that amusing.	If Microsoft tells you something's funny, run for your life. I found more humor in Win95.	58%	
Golden Gate	May '97 p. 128	Puzzle	Panasonic, 4701 Patrick Henry Drive, Santa Clara, CA 95054 (408) 653-1898	Nicely done watercolor style graphics.	Really bad acting; tedious puzzles; complete lack of originality; one of the worst endings in gaming history.	If you've played *Myst*, you don't need to play it again in San Francisco.	31%	
Golden Nugget	May '97 p. 132	Casino	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 874-4607	Adam West! Pure West!	Slow, even on a fast computer; no instructions; bad controls; poor recreation of casino games.	*Golden Nugget* makes you appreciate shareware casino games.	18%	
Grand Slam	September '97 p. 146	Sports	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 847-4607	Unique control meters for pitching and batting; good graphics and sound.	No network or Internet play; simplistic arcade feel; not as fun as other baseball games.	*Grand Slam* does not score a grand slam. You'd be better off with *Triple Play '98*.	72%	
Great Battles of Alexander 	September '97 p. 178	Historical Simulation	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	Rich graphics; historical accuracy; a good manual; a real sense of spectacle.	Slow battle development due to animation; steep learning curve; somewhat messy interface.	If you're at all interested in this era of warfare, this is the only game in town.	86%	
Grid Runner 	March '97 p. 144	Arcade	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614 (800) 874-4607	Fast-paced action, good-looking graphics.	Network play would have been great, and the split-screen two-player mode wears on the eyes.	*Grid Runner* dares to be different, and succeeds, but where's the 'net-play?	77%	
Hardline	May '97 p. 109	Action	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 847-4607	Video quality is good; the graphic sex scene is sure to tick off the busy-bodies in Washington.	Held together by the worst arcade sequences in recent memory.	Go watch a Troma movie instead.	24%	
Haunted Casino 	October '97 p. 231	Casino Game	Micro Star, 2245 Camino Vida Roble, Ste. 100, Carlsbad, CA 92009 (760) 931-4955	Doesn't take much hard-drive space.	Casino games are ugly and poorly designed; adventure game element doesn't work.	It attempts to combine two wildly different game genres and succeeds in making both look bad.	15%	
Helicops	July '97 p. 201	3D Shooter	7th Level, P.O. Box 832190, Richardson, TX 75081 (800) 884-8863	Nice arcade-like feel; solid if antiseptic graphics; interesting Japanese touches.	No real flight model to speak of; little replay value.	The lite beer of 3D shooters.	69%	
Heroes of Might & Magic II	February '97 p. 138	Strategy	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5650	A very well-designed strategy game. Anything this hard to stop playing has to be good.	The wait-your-turn, multi-player option for network and modem play can be tedious without a time limit imposed.	If you enjoy strategy games, you simply must have this one.	91%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
History of the World 	September '97 p. 192	Strategy	Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214-3192 (410) 254-9200	Fans of the original will enjoy the multi-player options.	Solo play is predictable and routine, and the game quickly becomes boring.	This is for fans of the boardgame only.	55%	

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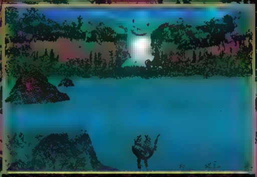

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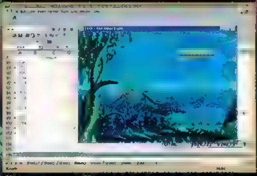

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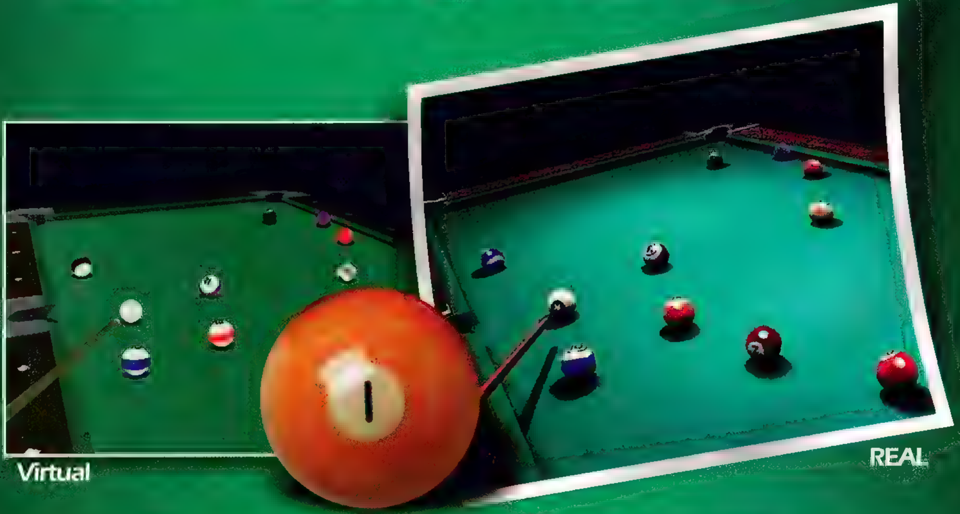

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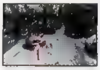
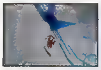
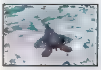
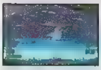
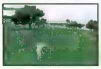
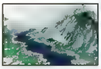
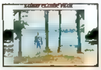
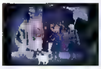
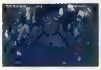
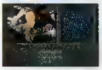
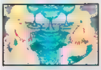
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Hoyle Poker 	August '97 p. 125	Card Game	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Many variations of poker, some you might not be familiar with; free access to SIGS.	The "attitude" gets tiresome real fast.	Sierra's put its experience to good use, with an attractive, easy-to-use, and fun poker simulation.	80%	
Hunter Hunted 	February '97 p. 155	Action	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	It looks good, sounds great, and is easy to pick up and play.	Addictive while it lasts, but it won't last for long. The two-player mode isn't so compelling.	Impressive example of 2D action gaming, showing what the PC can do in this genre.	78%	
Huygen's Disclosure 	April '97 p. 153	Adventure	Microforum, 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6M5A1 (800) 465-2323	Well designed interface; some challenging puzzles.	Some of the puzzles are of the abstract, *7th Guest* variety. Bad voice acting, graphics, and dialog.	A decent graphic adventure with a handful of significant flaws.	68%	
HyperBlade 	February '97 p.120	Action	Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., #1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200	Fast action, smooth graphics, and built-in 3D accelerator support.	Odd controls, erratic artificial intelligence, and disorienting environments.	If you're willing to accept a few minor flaws, this can make you a superstar in the sport of the future.	78%	
iF-22 	October '97 p. 206	Simulation	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	First detailed simulation of *F-22 Raptor*; dynamic campaign engine.	Graphics aren't that great; huge HD and hardware requirements; some significant design flaws.	The ideas behind it are sound; but lackluster execution keeps it from taking off.	65%	
iM1A2 Abrams 	June '97 p. 100	Simulation	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	An exciting and challenging game, with solid graphics, excellent sound, and lots of battlefield action.	Graphic presentation has some rough edges.	An exceptional, heavyweight sim, and a worthy successor to its forebearer.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Imperialism 	November '97 p. 297	Strategy	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529	Original, engrossing, and fun; for connoisseurs of raw strategy.	Artificial victory conditions; clumsy ocean maps; non-historical geography; no edit options.	Fresh, well-balanced gaming that serious strategy gamers shouldn't miss.	87%	
Imperium Galactica 	July '97 p. 186	Strategy	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, NY 10016 (800) 305-3390	It's an elegant, challenging, addictive take on the classic space strategy themes.	The interface is burdensome, and the manual is almost as confusing as it is helpful.	A surprising and delightful product for fans of conquer-the-galaxy gaming.	87%	
Independence Day 	July '97 p.181	Arcade	Fox Interactive, P.O. Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213 (310) 369-5369	Looks great, and runs well on minimum (though high) spec machines.	Insanely difficult, repetitive, uncontrollable with analog joystick.	Console freaks will love it, but true PC gamers will probably (and rightly) expect more.	70%	
Interstate '76 	June '97 p. 76	Action	Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200	Original premise; great gameplay, graphics; built-in Internet support.	Steep hardware requirements; some frustrating missions.	Full of 1970s atmosphere and attitude, *I76* proves that Activision has more tricks up its sleeve than giant robots.	93%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Iron Man/X-O Manowar 	April '97 p. 129	Arcade	Acclaim Entertainment, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800	Umm, I'm thinking...	Poor graphics; sluggish control; no AI to speak of; lack of innovation; outdated comic book license.	Avoid this dog like it has rabies, and don't say we didn't warn you.	15%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Jack Nicklaus 4 	August '97 p. 100	Sports	Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., # 500, San Jose, CA 95129 (415) 985-1700	Improved graphics; superb play; marvelous course designer; a chance to play with the Golden Bear.	Some aspects of play are too easy.	Required equipment for computer golfers.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Jetfighter III 	March '97 p. 142	Simulation	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263	Great action; impressive graphics, controls.	Fuzzy physics model, demanding system requirements. No multiplay.	If you can forgive the occasionally unrealistic action, you'll be rewarded with a most thrilling sim.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Jimmy Houston's Bass Tournament 	November '97 p. 289	Simulation	Sammy USA, 901 Cambridge Dr., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007 (847) 364-9787	Tournament play makes for a challenging day on the lake.	Unimpressive graphics, limited fishing areas, touchy casting interface, dull multimedia elements.	Anglers who prize diversity and challenge should stick to *Trophy Bass* or *Gone Fishin'*.	55%	
Jonny Quest: Roswell 	January '97 p. 240	Adventure	Virgin Sound & Vision, 122 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048 (310) 246-4666	Excellent production value for animation and sound.	Entirely too easy. The puzzles are very childish in nature.	The colorful animations of the "Jonny Quest" universe aren't enough to propel this breeze of an adventure.	60%	
Jumanji 	February '97 p. 145	Arcade	Philips Media, 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90024 (303) 739-4131	Sharp graphics; no violence; kids may enjoy the movie tie-in.	Too easy for skilled gamers; nothing to keep you coming back.	There are better arcade games out there for kids and adults.	65%	
Kick Off 97	September '97 p. 148	Sports	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 33-MAXIS	Simple and easy to get into; above average control.	Nonexistent AI; slow pace of play; some presentation bug problems.	Yet another mediocre soccer sim to gather dust in the bargain bins.	56%	
Krazy Ivan	April '97 p. 154	Action	Psygnosis, 919 East Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683	Lots of weapons and power-ups; smooth gameplay; multi-player.	Easily finished in a few sittings; occasionally wonky controls.	Even on the PlayStation, *Krazy Ivan* was too simplistic; most PC gamers will find it a hollow experience.	60%	
Krush Kill 'N Destroy 	May '97 p. 112	Strategy	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-7171	Polished graphics, nice variety, decent multi-player options.	Weak artificial intelligence. Extremely difficult missions.	Some of the touches that make other games great aren't here, but *KKND* is still worth trying.	82%	
Last Express, The	June '97 p. 108	Adventure	Broderbund Software, P.O. Box 6121, Novato CA 94948 (415) 382-4400	Lovely graphics and mood are complimented by good acting and a rich story line.	Puzzles are often quite difficult, and the save-game system is off-putting in the extreme.	A unique and polished adventure game with a strong, sustained, historical flavor.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Leisure Suit Larry in Love For Sail! 	April '97 p. 133	Adventure	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Great graphics; Al Lowe's skewed humor; the return of the (optional) text-based interface.	Fairly high "been there, done that" factor; sometimes the tongue-in-cheek humor is tiresome.	If you can handle Adult Situations and Partial Nudity, this is a ship-shape winner.	84%	
Links LS 1998 Edition	October '97 p. 240	Sports	Access, 4750 Wiley Post Way, Bldg. 1, # 200, Salt Lake City, UT 84116-2878 (800) 800-4880	Incredible visuals; stable Internet play; plenty of features and courses.	Some reports of bugs and video card problems; club selection quirks in off-line tourneys.	A small step forward for the best of golf sims, but a step forward nonetheless.	95%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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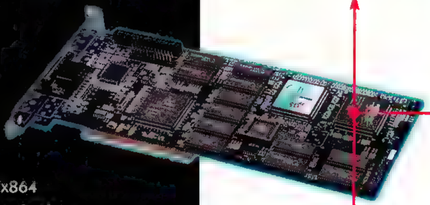

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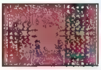
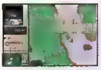
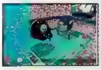
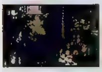
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Lords of the Realm II	February '97 p. 148	Strategy	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Excellent balance of strategic and tactical play; fun combat; superb realm-building.	More charts would help. AI is sometimes either too easy or too hard. No custom castles!	Fun for both the empire-builder and the medieval combatant, with all the intrigue and blood-letting you want.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Lose Your Marbles 	November '97 p. 241	Puzzle	SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (888) SEGASOFT	Highly addictive gameplay; original concept; good graphics and sound effects.	Awkward keyboard configurations for multi-player games; no Internet mode.	Good clean fun that hooks you from the very start.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
M.A.X. 	April '97 p. 124	Strategy	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 553-6678	Great balance among units and structures; tough AI; multi-player options; loads of replay value.	No Internet support; manual should have been better.	This could end up being the best turn-based strategy game of 1997.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Machine Hunter	November '97 p. 232	Action	MGM Interactive, 2500 Broadway St., Santa Monica, CA 90404-3061 (800) 586-2021	Addictive action. Unique strategy makes for varied gameplay.	Unimpressive graphics; sluggish gameplay on some systems.	Despite the chunky graphics and clunky control, this delivers a nice blend of fast-paced fun and puzzling.	72%	
Madden NFL 97 	January '97 p. 216	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Excellent graphics and animation; smooth interface; more than 100 teams.	The AI is suspect; questionable season simulation results; mediocre commentary; gameplay quirks.	There's a lot of fun to be had with *Madden NFL 97*, but not a lot of realism.	74%	
Magic: The Gathering	June '97 p. 86	Strategy	Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Sq. Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (800) 695-4263	Stays true to the Wizards of the Coast card game; intelligent computer AI.	Adventure element is not very interesting; no multi-player support; high system requirements.	If you've played the card game, you'll like the PC version; it's also a good way to learn.	83%	
Magic: The Gathering — BattleMage	May '97 p. 102	Action	Acclaim, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2708 (516) 759-7900	It tries to capture the feel of playing *Magic: The Gathering* real-time.	It fails to achieve its goal with any sort of success A terrible game.	If you want *Magic: TG* on the PC, check out MicroProse's turn-based version.	30%	
Marble Drop	July '97 p. 159	Puzzle	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 33-MAXIS	Gorgeous DaVinci-style graphics, low system requirements.	Tedious and repetitive gameplay; no level editor; not much fun.	*Marble Drop* is a love-it or loathe-it title. Proceed at your own risk.	48%	
Master of Orion: Battle at Antares	March '97 p. 134	Strategy	MicroProse, 280 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245 (410) 771-1151	Endless replay value, thanks to randomly generated universes and gameplay variables.	The amount of micromanaging required is almost overwhelming.	A great update of a classic game, even with the micromanaging.	86%	
Maui Mallard in Cold Shadow 	April '97 p. 113	Arcade	Disney Interactive, 500 South Beuna Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521 (800) 426-3306	Smooth animation and Disney's attention to character design.	Reliance on traditional platform formula makes it predictable.	If you're nostalgic for a mindless platform thrill, this could be it, but there are better action games.	62%	
MDK	July '97 p. 166	Action	Playmates Interactive, 16200 S. Trojan Way, La Mirada, CA 90638 (310) 407-1490	Silky smooth performance, difficult levels, incredible graphics.	Complicated interface, vague puzzles and objectives; too short.	If you can warm to the console-style sensibilities of *MDK*, you'll find a brief but well-done action game.	86%	

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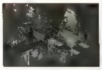
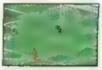
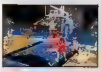
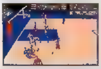
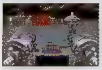
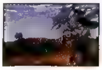
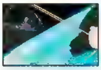
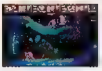
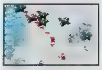
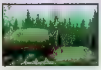
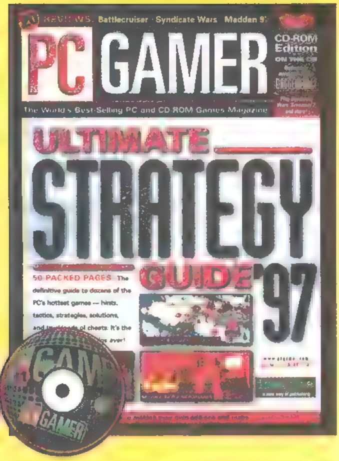
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Meat Puppet 	October '97 p. 244	Action	Playmates Interactive, 16200 S. Trojan Way, La Mirada, CA 90638 (310) 407-1490	Impressive character animation. Great music and sound effects.	Controls are awful and make playing the game a chore. Puzzles are annoying. AI is baffling.	Watch "Aeon Flux" instead. You get great animation without carpal tunnel syndrome.	45%	
Microsoft Golf 3.0 	April '97 p. 136	Sports	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (800) 429-9400	Easy multi-player options for playing over the 'net.	The graphics should've been updated; the menu-driven interface is sorta clunky.	If Internet competition is your thing, *MS Golf* delivers; if you're a die-hard duffer, stick to *Links LS*.	65%	
Microsoft Soccer 	March '97 p. 129	Sports	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (800) 429-9400	Easy installation; network play.	Frustrating gameplay; average graphics; cheesy sound effects; only one view of on-field gameplay.	In the market for a great soccer sim? You won't find it here.	58%	
Mode 	January '97 p. 48	Adventure	Corel Corp., 1600 Carling Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1Z8R7 (800) 772-6735	Hitting the escape button gets you out of the game very quickly.	It exists. It takes up four CDs that would have been better used for John Tesh music.	The nadir of non-interactive video junk.	10%	
Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh 	April '97 p. 150	Adventure	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 533-6678	The music and sound effects provide a wonderful atmosphere.	Plot and puzzles are ordinary, without anything new to offer the seasoned player.	A good introduction to the adventure game genre, but there's better out there.	65%	
Mutant Penguins 	June '97 p. 96	Puzzle/Arcade	GameTek, Three Harbour Dr., Suite 110, Sausalito, CA 94965 (800) GAMETEK	Whimsical graphics, nice music, and tough puzzles.	Repeated access of the CD-ROM under Win95 will frustrate most players.	A new take on *Lemmings* with a budget price, *Mutant Penguins* is a wannabe winner.	68%	
NASCAR Racing 2 	March '97 p. 116	Simulation	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Improved graphics, interface; great multi-player options.	Demanding system requirements. Occasionally fishy AI.	If you're a fan of the original, this is worthwhile. If you never tried the original, here's your chance.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
NBA Full Court Press 	January '97 p. 247	Sports	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (800) 429-9400	Slick presentation; great commentary; what you'd expect from an NBA license.	Bland graphics; unsatisfying feel; doesn't pack the kind of attitude an NBA license suggests.	There have been better basketball games; there's better to come. Why buy this?	60%	
NBA Live 97 	April '97 p. 98	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Incredible graphics, full rosters, all the stats, and unequaled presentation.	Slippery control, poor frame-rate on slower systems, and some flaws as a sim.	The best-looking, best-playing, basketball game available, even with its flaws.	84%	
NCAA Basketball Final Four '97 	July '97 p. 154	Sports	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato,CA 94945 (415) 897-9900	Unprecedented variety of post-up moves.	Sloppy control; basketball is too big for the rim; speed is a little slow.	It's the best college hoops game on the PC, but there isn't much competition out there, either.	71%	
Necrodome 	February '97 p. 114	Arcade	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 210, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6880	Many play options; Internet support; lots of things to smash and shoot.	Murky, circular levels; too many stops and starts.	Fun and playable, but not really remarkable.	84%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Need for Speed II	July '97 p. 180	Arcade	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Pretty graphics, lots of cute touches; mucho multi-player options.	Short tracks; no cops; slower than molasses on low-end Pentiums.	Try as it might, this just can't touch the original.	73%	
Nemesis: The Wizardry Adventure 	February '97 p.134	Adventure	Sir-tech Software, P.O. BOX 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 393-6633	Pretty graphics; unique puzzles; variety of creatures, dungeons.	Awkward combat interface; story line isn't involving.	A decent adventure, but if you're dying to play more *Wizardry* games, you're bound to be disappointed.	73%	
Nihilist 	March '97 p. 158	Arcade	Philips Media, 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Seventh Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888	The soundtrack is vaguely rocking.	Shallow gameplay and generally mediocre design make this game a downer even in the bargain bin.	Flashy graphics mean little when a game is this bad.	26%	
Noir	February '97 p. 126	Adventure	Cyberdreams, 23586 Calabasas Road, Suite 102, Calabasas, CA 91302 (818) 222-9348	Well-chosen locations and music create the feeling of 1940s film noir.	Lack of interactivity; infuriatingly confusing movement interface.	Film buffs might appreciate this, but hard-core adventure gamers will be let down.	58%	
Norse by Norsewest 	August '97 p. 122	Action/Strategy	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave. Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-4263	It's more of the same for Lost Vikings buffs; nice presentation of cutscenes.	Sub-par graphics; very little improvement over the original.	Hardly a respectable follow-up, but it may keep fans of the series busy.	62%	
Obsidian	May '97 p.124	Action/Strategy	SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Drive, Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400	Great graphics and sound, engaging story line.	Lots of CD swapping. Brief gameplay for experienced adventure fans.	Distinguishs itself as a truly different adventure, where the traditional melds with the abstract.	83%	
Outlaws	July '97 p.174	Action	LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7927	Nice graphics, cutscenes; very good multi-player action and musical score.	In single-player mode, some levels are frustrating; enemy AI leaves much to be desired.	*Outlaws* has more atmosphere than any ten other 3D shooters, but it's not perfect.	82%	
Outpost 2	November '97 p. 225	Strategy	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Variety spices up campaign missions; good multi-player action; free Internet play.	Inadequate manual; offers little originality.	An enjoyable, solid game that doesn't deserve to be saddled with its predecessor's reputation.	75%	
Over the Reich 	March '97 p. 165	Wargame	Avalon Hill, 4517 Harftord Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 (410) 254-9200	Elegant interface; exciting battles; engrossing campaign play.	High-tech sim-jockeys may find it too sedate, maybe too abstract.	A unique, intelligent game; should captivate anyone with an interest in WWII aerial combat.	85%	
Pacific General	November '97 p. 312	Strategy	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201 Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (408) 737-6800	Many stand-alone scenarios are fun and historically interesting.	Bad changes to the interface; Battle Generator is a nightmare; can't save at the end of a campaign battle!	One of the biggest disappointments I've ever experienced as a game reviewer.	48%	
Pandemonium 	November '97 p. 246	Action	Crystal Dynamics, 2460 Embarcadero Way, Palo Alto, CA 94303 (800) 262-7668	Attractive graphics, 3Dfx support, and large game world.	With a few exceptions, *Pandemonium* is full of repetitive, uninventive side-scrolling gameplay.	Even the most dedicated side-scroller fans will grit their teeth on this one.	58%	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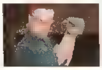
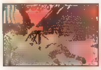
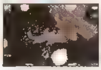
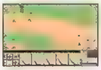
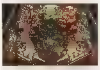
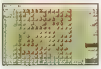
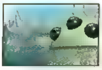
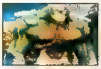
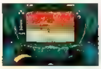
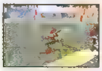
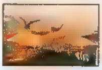
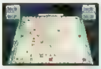
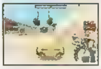
Perfect Weapon 	July '97 p. 171	Fighting	ASC Games, 9 Old Kings Highway South, Suite 301, Darien, CT 06820 (203) 327-3326	Smooth animation and nice backgrounds.	Plays crummy; annoying sound effects. Tedious, and for the most part unenjoyable.	*Perfect Weapon* just doesn't live up to its name.	54%	
PGA Tour Pro	September '97 p. 184	Sports	EA Sports, P.O. Box 7578, San Mateo, CA 94403-7578 (415) 513-7171	Photo-realistic graphics and video-captured players; PIP windows are fun.	Poor club suggestion; targeting arrow limits play; requires a monster system to enjoy.	*PGA Tour Pro* is great to look at, but the gameplay doesn't match the graphics.	70%	
Phantasmagoria: Puzzle of Flesh	March '97 p. 122	Adventure	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Original premise; good acting; generally good special effects.	Very little interactivity; far too easy; ending feels tacked-on.	Has great production values and more shock value than any previous adventure, but as a game, it falls flat.	63%	
POD	July '97 p. 155	Arcade Racing	Ubi Soft, 625 Third Street, 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 547-4000	Beautiful with MMX and 3D accelerator; tons of replay value with Internet connection.	Control is imprecise; there's no real feeling of speed; high system requirements.	It's pretty to look at but not that much fun to play. Nice Internet options.	65%	
Power F1	September '97 p. 150	Sports	Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 616-2022	Fun arcade racing in a realistic setting; impressive graphics, sound; *Big Red Racing* is thrown in.	Poor control; high system requirements.	A decent action-based racing game that isn't good enough to lead the pack.	73%	
Powerslave	May '97 p. 107	Action	Playmates Interactive, 611 Anton Blvd., Suite 500, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 (714) 428-2112	Good level-design, novel setting, nice music. Well intentioned...	...But poorly executed, with a dated engine; inadequacies in everything from mouse support to modem play.	Pick up *Duke* or *Quake*, or wait for *Shadow Warrior, Blood, Jedi Knight*, etc...	58%	
Pray for Death 	February '97 p.163	Fighting Game	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (714) 883-8710	Lovely graphics and audio design.	Everyting else — plays worse than *Killer Instinct.*	With good looks and lousy gameplay, it's the *Myst* of fighting games.	24%	
Privateer 2: The Darkening 	March '97 p. 108	Action	Origin, 5918 Courtyard Dr., Austin, TX 78730 (512) 434-4357	Great graphics; good acting; lots of weapons and ships.	A few bugs slipped by in the playtesting stages; joystick control doesn't support fancier features.	A terrific space shoot'em up that has more to do between missions than watch movies.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Pro League Baseball '97 	May '97 p. 106	Sports	Micro Sports Inc., 1001 Millersville Road, Lancaster, PA 17604-9975 (800) 334-2722	Hands-off general manager feature does an adequate job.	The game is buggy and the control interface is poorly designed.	Practically useless manual. Problem-plagued graphics and an unplayable arcade control system.	30%	
Pro-Pinball: Timeshock! 	October '97 p. 241	Arcade	Empire, 580 California St., 16th Flr., San Francisco CA 94104 (415) 439-4854	Great ball physics, superb realism, great table design.	Only one table. Gets repetitive in a hurry.	If you've got that itch to play some pinball, but can't get to the pub, this is the next best thing.	82%	
Puzzle Collection, The 	November '97 p. 308	Puzzle	Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (800) 429-9400	Some engaging and fun puzzles; wide range of puzzles may satisfy whole family.	Some real stinkers in the mix; wide range of difficulty may turn off whole family.	A decent package for puzzle fiends, but none of the puzzles comes close to *Tetris.*	52%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Rally Championship	September '97 p.188	Arcade	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (800) 874-4607	Looks, sounds, and feels like a driving game ought to look, sound, and feel.	Once completed, you may be too exhausted to play it again. Some technical glitches.	An outstanding racer that should please arcade and simulation fans alike.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Rama 	February '97 p. 152	Adventure	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	A rich, faithful adaptation of the novels; lovely interface; gorgeous visuals.	The most complicated, convoluted puzzles you've ever wrestled with.	A monumental achievment; a landmark game that raises the bar several notches.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Realms of the Haunting	April '97 p. 140	Adventure	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 468-3775	Large game world; devious puzzles; creepy atmosphere.	Clunky interface; sluggish beginning; occasionally vague plot.	If you've been looking for a good adventure yarn with genuine thrills, *Realms* awaits.	86%	
Redneck Rampage 	July '97 p. 162	First-person Shooter	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 468-3775	Wonderful audio/visual presentation; redneck humor.	Requires massive hard-disk space. Offensive language may be rough for young ears.	If you bought a PC just so you could play this game, you might be a... oh, never mind.	87%	
Resident Evil	November '97 p. 215	Adventure	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (800) 874-4607	Terrific graphics, great atmosphere, loads of blood and guts to satisfy splatter fans.	Some silly control, inventory, and save-game flubs mar an otherwise excellent game.	If you can overlook the minor niggles, *Resident Evil* comes highly recommended.	87%	
RoboQuest 	April '97 p. 145	Action	Philips Media, 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888	Since it doesn't include an uninstall program, you'll get some practice in deleting files.	Construction kit is linear and pointless; the sub-par *Doom*-clone doesn't make up for it.	Two poorly designed segments can't hope to make a good game.	12%	
Rocket Jockey 	February '97 p.130	Action	SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400	Addictive action, intuitive controls, loads of variety.	Demanding requirements, annoying time limits, no sign of the touted multi-player features.	A raucous action game that pulls off a inventive theme with loads of style, humor, and addictive gameplay.	85%	
SCARAB	June '97 p. 116	Action	Electronic Arts, P.O. Box 7578, San Mateo, CA 94403-7578 (415) 571-7171	Internet play is good fun; an okay title for fans of *Powerslave* and *MechWarrior 2*.	Poor graphics; you have to admit that *Powerslave* and *Mech2* did it much better.	Unless you're extremely desperate for a different style of Deathmatch, skip it.	58%	
Scorched Planet 	April '97 p. 146	Action	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (714) 883-8710	Splendid graphics; good gameplay, and a slick morphing vehicle to control.	Music isn't great; full-motion video is only so-so.	This has the fun, creative spark that too many other games aim for and miss.	85%	
Scrabble 	October '97 p. 230	Strategy	Hasbro Interactive, 50 Dunham Road, Beverly, MA 01915 (508) 921-3700	Handy help features; multi-player options; plenty of challenge.	Takes some effort to find a suitable difficulty level; some of the baordgame's charm is lost.	*Scrabble* is best played on a board and not on a PC, but this comes really close.	75%	
Screamer 2 	January '97 p. 256	Arcade	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (714) 883-8710	Astonishing graphics; great arcade driving "feel" puts *Ridge Racer* to shame.	Needs more tracks and more cars.	Pull this out when your Playstation-owning friends come over, and be sure to wipe up the drool afterwards.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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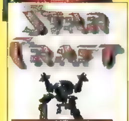

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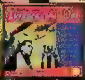

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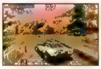
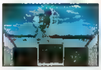
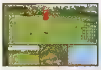
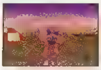
Product Information Number 112

PCGR1297P3

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Sega Rally PC 	May '97 p. 140	Arcade	Sega, 150 Shoreline Drive, Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400	Great graphics; smooth control; excellent Internet play.	May leave you craving more tracks and cars; some pretty high system requirements.	This great conversion is a must-have for arcade racing fans.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Sentient	August '97 p. 118	Adventure/RPG	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683	A genuinely large gaming world; lots of characters to interact with.	Spotty Direct3D support; interface from Hell; dialog that reads like a third generation translation.	Those who are able to cope with its cumbersome shortcomings may like *Sentient.*	56%	
Shadows over Riva	August '97 p. 130	Roleplaying	Sir-tech Software, P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 393-6633	Engrossing story line; lots of NPCs, items, subquests, and stats for hard-core gamers.	Dated graphics; clumsy interface at times; annoying combat views.	It's a worthy sequel to *Star Trail*, and the old engine is still fun to play with.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Shattered Steel 	January '97 p. 239	Action	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 969-4263	Nice, fast graphics; great network play; more big-robot action than you can shake a joystick at.	A bit lacking on the strategy side.	For no-fault mech combat, *Shattered Steel* is a blast.	87%	
Shivers II: Harvest of Souls	July '97 p. 170	Puzzle	Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Intricate plot that will use all your detective and puzzle-solving skills.	The plot's vague early on, and loses momentum at the end.	A pretty good game with a little bit of everything that makes graphic adventures worthwhile.	79%	
SimCopter	March '97 p. 150	Simulation	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 33-MAXIS	Swooping around skyscrapers is a blast.	Control is too simplistic; and not all of the bugs have been cleaned up.	Think of it as a modern *Choplifter*, and you'll be fine; think of it as a sim, and you're doomed.	76%	
SimGolf 	April '97 p. 107	Sports	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 33-MAXIS	Robert Trent Jones, Jr., does the video tips. The profile view is well done.	Poor controls, ancient graphics, bad interface.	There are much better golf games out there.	52%	
SkyNET	February '97 p. 108	Action	Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Dr., Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300	Clean SVGA graphics; slick interface; expansive mission areas; new multi-player options.	Extremely difficult at times; poor control layout for Hunter/Killer.	If you're into multi-player games or looking for something different, this is hard to beat.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Slamscape 	February '97 p. 146	Action	Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 (800) 469-2539	Uh, well, God Lives Underwater did do the soundtrack.	Overall lousy game play, no networking, audio design still sucks.	This sucks, Beavis — even a dill-hole can figure that much out!	53%	
Soldier Boyz	September '97 p.156	Arcade	DreamCatcher, 265 Rimrock Rd., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J3C6 (888) 611-9999	Uh, um, let me think..., you can kill people and not get arrested.	Sloppy video; no control; not politically correct by any stretch of the imagination.	*Soldier Boyz* is bad newz.	21%	
Solid Ice	February '97 p. 124	Sports	Empire Interactive, 13220 Wisteria Dr., Germantown, MD 20874 (301) 916-9302	Flexible player editor; you can design uniforms.	Gameplay is slow, and the artificial intelligence is merely average.	There are better hockey games, and until this undergoes revisions, customizability is its only saving grace.	30%	

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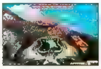
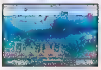
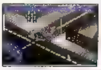
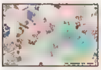
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Soultrap 	May '97 p. 113	Action/Puzzle	Microforum, 1 Woodborough Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (800) 685-3863	Funky graphics and a unique play system.	Frustratingly narrow levels cause you to die more often than not; a stinker of an ending.	3D platformer fans may dig it, but the rest of us may find it too frustrating.	69%	
Space Bar, The 	October '97 p. 254	Adventure	SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (888) 734-2763	Hilarious dialog; engaging story. Good puzzles. Excellent interface.	Frequent CD swapping. Some of the voice acting is poor. Some difficult puzzles.	A return to the older style of adventure gaming, reminiscent of Infocom at its best.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Spaceward Ho! IV 	February '97 p.118	Strategy	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5600	Easy to learn, but with hidden depth; tenacious AI opponents; multi-player options.	A few gamers who insist on micro-managing all the fiddly bits won't go for it.	A great little strategy game, and with a street price that should be less than $30, it's a bargain.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Star Command: Revolution 	June '97 p. 94	Strategy	GT Interactive, 16 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (800) 434-2637	Many units; some new gameplay concepts; long, non-linear campaign.	Low-key action; ho-hum graphics; token space environment.	There are some new twists here, but nothing really compelling.	75%	
Star General 	March '97 p. 116	Strategy	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 210, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529	Good, jump-right-in gameplay with time-tested *Panzer General* play style.	Mediocre, confusing graphics. Some scenario goals are far-fetched. Some long waits.	A good beer-n-pretzels space wargame for those who like their combat without micromanagement.	86%	
Star Trek: Generations 	August '97 p. 96	Action/Adventure	MicroProse, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1164	Some Trek fans will enjoy playing as crew; good use of film footage.	Virtually worthless save-game feature; awkward controls; all the problems of the movie.	Pass this one up, unless you're an absolutely rabid Trek fan.	64%	
Star Trek: Starfleet Academy 	November '97 p. 255	Action	Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 553-6655	Lots for Trek fans to like; decent multi-player mode adds longevity.	Unsuitable overall approach; uninspired FMV; simplistic combat.	A promising idea that's inadequately executed — budding Starfleet captains will be disappointed.	67%	
Starfighter 	March '97 p. 166	Arcade	3DO, 600 Galveston Drive, Redwood City, CA 94063 (415) 261-3454	Smooth graphics; plenty of missions; the explosions are really cool.	Control is on the jumpy side; cruddy mission map; loads of scenery pop-up.	It's a clone of *Terminal Velocity*, but at least it's remotely enjoyable.	70%	
Stargunner 	June '97 p. 91	Arcade	Apogee, P.O. Box 496419, Garland, TX 75049 800-APOGEE1	A good, pure, arcade-shooter; clean, crisp graphics.	The game may be too hard, even on the easy settings.	If you're in the mood for an arcade-shooter, this is one of the best — it may be as good as *Raptor*.	80%	
Stars! 	April '97 p.106	Strategy	Empire Interactive, 13220 Wisteria Drive, Germantown, MD 20874 (301) 916-9302	Rich in depth and flexibilty, intuitive interface, excellent manual, unmatched tutorial.	The number of command windows can be confusing. May not interest casual gamers.	Proves there can be more to games than cute characters and big explosions.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Steel Panthers II 	February '97 p. 158	Wargame	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6880	Great graphics; silky-smooth interface; tremendous variety of scenarios.	Lots of niggling little flaws that indicate a premature release.	When and if the bugs are fixed with a patch, this'll be a helluva wargame.	80%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Surface Tension 	February '97 p. 156	Action	Gametek Inc., 3 Harbor Drive, Suite 110, Sausalito, CA 94965 (800) GAMETEK	Mission maps are large, and there are plenty of missions to fly.	Still, you have to put up with a crummy flight model, shabby acting, and sub-par graphics.	It's basically a sci-fi rehash of *Commanche*, but it may interest die-hards.	62%	
Syndicate Wars 	January '97 p. 221	Action	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Demanding real-time action; wonderfully dark and moody feel.	Dark graphics occasionally make details hard to spot; missions could use more variety.	If you liked the destruction and carnage of the original, prepare to create a new world order.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
T-MEK 	June '97 p. 90	Arcade	WizardWorks, 2300 Berkshire Lane North, Plymouth, MN, 55441 (612) 559-5301	Two modes of play, good frame rate.	Poor graphics even in high detail mode, limited gameplay.	The promise of a decent 'mech fighter is lost in the reality of this lackluster shooter.	36%	
Ten Pin Alley 	July '97 p. 163	Sports Simulation	ASC Games, 9 Old Kings Hwy., South, Suite 301, Darien, CT 06820 (203) 327-3326	Good use of humor to mock the very sport it's based on.	Limited control over the action of the game; too much time is spent watching the action.	A great party game, and a nice relaxing time-killer even if you don't like bowling.	82%	
Test Drive Off Road 	June '97 p. 112	Racing	Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., # 500, San Jose, CA 95129 (800) 245-7744	Network play is okay; groovy thrash soundtrack.	Scenery pop-in from hell; bizarre physics; chunck-a-licious graphics.	It would be better to find an Apple IIe emulator and get your hands on the original *Test Drive*.	64%	
Theme Hospital 	June '97 p. 104	Simulation	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Very original, deeply absorbing, and lots of fun to watch.	Intense micro-management can become daunting.	Oodles of gameplay and lots of laughs, for those who have plenty of patience and concentration.	86%	
Third Reich PC 	February '97 p.168	Wargame	Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214 (410) 254-9200	It's a solid, faithful adaptation of the boardgame.	But that's all it is — there's no multi-play, no what-ifs — just a conversion of the board game.	If it had come out five or six years ago, it coulda been a contender.	72%	
Time Warriors 	November '97 p. 238	Arcade	Malofilm, 3575 St- Laurent St., Ste. 650, Montreal Canada H2X 2T7 (514) 844-4555	It's funny to hear the announcer say "Dong Wins."	Crap control; bad animation; playing on different difficulty levels doesn't change gameplay that much.	Buy this if you want to learn how not to do a 3D fighter.	34%	
Timelapse 	April '97 p. 110	Puzzle	GTE Entertainment, 1035 Corte Del Nogal, #100, Carlsbad CA 92009 (800) GTE-TODAY	Beautiful graphics; intriguing story line; some interesting puzzles.	Too many meaningless puzzles; restricted movement; linear gameplay; standard point-and-click affair.	The graphics and story line aren't enough to save *Timelapse*.	60%	
Tom Clancy SSN 	March '97 p. 130	Simulation	Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 (800) 910-0099	Great atmosphere, terrific sound, and plenty of gameplay to get your teeth into.	Missions can become repetitive; no facility to save the game within a mission.	Too flashy for the real experts, but one of the most fun and playable sub games around.	84%	
Tomb Raider 	February '97 p. 104	Action Adventure	Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 616-2022	Terrific puzzle design, nail-biting action, sumptuous environments.	Very rare and minor though they are, some clipping or polygon-cracking bugs crop up from time to time.	*Tomb Raider* is one of the most addictive, original, and atmospheric games the PC has ever seen.	95%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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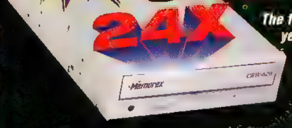
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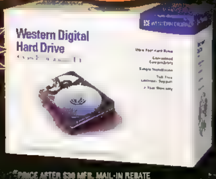

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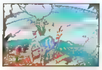
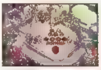
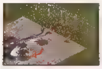
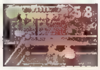
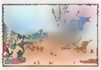
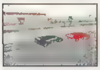
Tony LaRussa Baseball 4	September '97 p. 196	Sports	Maxis, 212 N. California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 336-2947	Pitcher/batter animations are slick; management and sim options are still solid.	Worse stadium graphics than in the previous game; sluggish; few improvements.	Not a very impressive outing from one of the giants of the sport.	62%	
Toonstruck 	January '97 p. 254	Adventure	Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 874-4607	Great presentation wrapped around a solid, playable adventure.	Tiresome interaction, predictable humor, and neverending cliches grind down your will to live.	Cartoon freaks will have some fun, but for everyone else, this simply tries way too hard to amuse.	70%	
Toy Story	April '97 p. 149	Action	Disney Interactive, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521 (800) 426-3306	Those cute *Toy Story* characters.	Sluggish control; children will find it overly difficult and frustrating.	This is just a lackluster side-scroller game; it doesn't come close to recapturing the magic of the film.	27%	
Triple Play 98	August '97 p. 106	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Awesome atmosphere; fast, instinctive play; oodles of options.	Requires a monster machine and a monster install for peak performance of the game.	Baseball on the PC doesn't get any more fun than this. Unreservedly recommended.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Twinsen's Odyssey	October '97 p. 220	Adventure	Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., #1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200	Bizarre environments, characters; massive game world; tasty graphics.	Frustrating controls; crummy voice-acting; some difficult puzzles.	Fans of the original should line up and snag a copy, but newcomers should be aware of the game's flaws.	80%	
Ultra Pinball 3D: Creep Night 	February '97 p. 141	Pinball	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Great graphics effects, sounds, and gameplay.	Only three tables; limited appeal with the "creepy" theme.	Whether you love pinball or not, this game will grab your attention... and keep it.	85%	
Virtua Squad	January '97 p. 226	Arcade	Sega Entertainment, 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400	Spectacular to look at, and intensely fun to play in the early stages.	Only three levels, which are over all too quickly.	Entertaining; competent "twitch" game; but will likely be gathering dust a few weeks after purchase.	70%	
Wages of War: TBOB 	March '97 p. 106	Strategy	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5600	The trimmings aren't much, but the basic game is a solid and rewarding effort.	Graphics are a little bland and dated; thin manual could've been better.	A few quirks don't keep this from being a good squad-level combat game.	78%	
War Wind	January '97 p. 230	Strategy	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (800) 601-7529	A detailed approach to real-time strategy gaming, with complex units and a rich background.	Some goals are not clearly defined.	A strong, fulfilling strategy title; a good bet if you want to move on to more complex gaming than *WCII*.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
WarBirds	October '97 p. 234	Online Flight Sim	iMagic Online, 1701 NW Hwy., Grapevine, TX 76051 (817) 424-5638	Top 'net technology; human opponents; realistic flight-modeling; 100-plus player arenas.	Poor graphics; lack of official documentation; high cost; tough online competitors.	Highly recommended to serious flight sim fans with time and money to spare.	78%	
Warlords III	October '97 p. 248	Strategy	Broderbund/ Red Orb, P.O. Box 6121, Novato, CA 94948 (415) 382-4400	Stable program; lovely art; solid AI and scenarios; new TCP/IP and IPX support.	Little customizability; middling maps; no economics or tactical combat; lack of charisma.	Demanding and interesting, *Warlords III* offers a no-frills, focused challenge.	85%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Wipeout XL	September '97 p. 161	Arcade	Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683	Graphically stunning; excellent control.	No Internet or multi-player play (although it's promised in a future patch); limited replay value.	An adrenaline-soaked showcase of PC polygon-pushing prowess.	84%	
Wooden Ships and Iron Men	January '97 p. 262	Wargame	Avalon Hill, 4517 Hartford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 (410) 254-9200	Snappy graphics; marvelously intuitive interface; a good scenario generator.	The Campaign element is a bit thin, and those log entries grow tiresome rather quickly.	This game is easy to like if you have any interest in the subject matter.	80%	
WWF in Your House 	April '97 p. 111	Arcade	Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800	Manages to be totally stupid and totally enjoyable; excellent network play.	This game deserved better graphics than it got.	Takes the dumbest phenomenon on cable television and makes it fun.	79%	
X-COM: Apocalypse	October '97 p. 202	Strategy	MicroProse, 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245 (800) 659-GAME	A highly enjoyable strategy game. All the "first encounters" are as intriguing as ever.	Amount of micromanagement borders on the absurd; takes practice to get controls down.	X-COM fans will enjoy having another go at those menacing aliens.	86%	
X-Men: Children of the Atom 	September '97 p. 152	Fighting	Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800	Great-looking animation, ultra-enjoyable button-mashing madness.	Runs in a bizarre resolution; a few joystick compatibility problems.	Though it has its flaws, *X-Men* is a perfectly enjoyable adrenaline rush.	78%	
X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	July '97 p.146	Space Combat	LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7927	Superior graphics; great multi-player action; well-designed cooperative missions.	No 3D support; limited single player gaming; lack of dramatic story; unreliable Internet play.	Primarily a multi-player game, *X v. TIE* is ahead of its time.	87%	
X-Car: Experimental Racing 	November '97 p. 210	Simulation	Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Dr., Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300	Customizable; smooth frame rate; inventive concept.	Controls don't feel right; boring default cars; relentless AI.	*XCar* is great for tinkerers and pit crew wannabes, but casual gamers will find it too much to handle.	68%	
Yoda Stories	July '97 p. 161	Adventure	LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7927	Simple and solid gameplay; 15 deceptively large levels; bonus multimedia movie.	The big head characters may be too cute for some. Graphics aren't great.	*Yoda Stories* is a fun, addictive little game in the fine tradition of Star Wars titles.	80%	
You Don't Know Jack Movies	July '97 p. 200	Trivia	Berkeley Systems, 2095 Rose Street, Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 540-5535	Great presentation; lots of humor, and just darn tremendous fun to play.	800 questions will eventually run out, relegating it to the back of the shelf.	If you can round up one or two other movie buffs, this is a must-buy.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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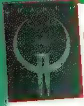

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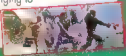
DAIKATANA 60335 $45 The creators of Doom are back with their own company Ion Storm and are bringing to you Daikatana. You and your companions are in search of an ancient Japanese sword possessing magical powers including the ability to travel through time



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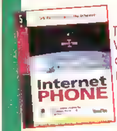

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DARK REIGN In an uncharted region of space, a long-forgotten society is ravaged by a devastating war that rages across the galaxy. As your planet succumbs to the merciless tide of destruction you have one last chance to save your civilization 55156 $46

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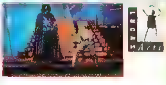

REBELLION The Galactic Empire and Rebel Alliance forces dramatically collide in Rebellion, the ultimate Star Wars strategy game 56350 $53

ACTIVISION

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY The highly anticipated sequel to the cultishly popular Little Big Adventure. Once again Adeline places you in the shoes of the game's hapless protagonist, Twinsen 56833 $49

GT Interactive Software

TOTAL ANNIHILATION Total Annihilation is a real-time war game featuring true 3D terrain. Tanks drive up and over hills, tilting and rocking with each bump in the landscape and impact with enemy weapons 56802 $45

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Product Information Number 342

THE PC GAMER
HARDWARE
REVIEWS INDEX

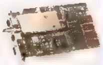
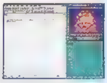
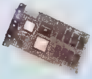
DVD

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV	August '97 p. 153	$849.99	Hi-Val *www.hival.com* (714) 953-3080	Installs easily and works perfectly. Good tech support. Excellent picture, sound quality. Can be used on PC and TV simultaneously.	Steep price. Wireless sharing can be inconvenient.	The Hi-Val DVD PC-to-TV upgrade kit is excellent. If you're ready to jump on the DVD bandwagon, this is the way to go.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

GAMEPADS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
ACT Labs PowerRamp Mite	October '97 p. 282	$29	ACT Labs *www.actlab.com* (604) 278-3650	Great for games without built-in gamepad or joystick support; comfortable feel; the low-tech approach was a good way to go.	Four-way switch is hard to reach during fierce battles.	Great feel, quality construction, and easy programmability make the PowerRamp Mite a winner.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
InterAct 3D Program Pad	July '97 p. 225	$29.99	InterAct Multimedia Products *www.interact-acc.com* (310)732-6866	Oh, so very comfortable! Plenty of buttons to program.	Baffling programming interface, and the instructions don't help much. Misleading name.	This is the most comfortable gamepad we've seen recently, and it is programmable, with a little work.	
Logitech ThunderPad Digital	July '97 p. 225	$29.99	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (510) 795-8500	Good price. Looks kind of cool (if you like the Batman look for your controllers). Intuitive programming interface.	Terribly uncomfortable. Pretty poor placement of buttons and thumb pad; has the feel of an early gamepad.	Logitech's first foray into gamepads is a major disappointment. Don't even bother with this poorly designed pad.	

GRAPHICS ACCELERATORS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
ATI All-in-Wonder 	July '97 p. 228	$329	ATI Technologies Inc. *www.atitech.com* (905) 882-2626	Skillful integration of 3D, video capture, and TV display in one card. Installation was a snap, and day to day performance was good.	3D acceleration was adequate but lacks native support for popular games.	The robust features and easy operation of the All-in-Wonder makes this a card to lust after.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
ATI – TV 	May '97 p. 153	$129	ATI Technologies *www.atitech.com* (905) 882-2626	Easy to install; tons of handy features; takes almost no processor power.	Only works with AMC-enabled video cards (currently only four ATI boards); decreases productivity while trying to work.	With its extremely powerful and versatile software suite, the ATI-TV card is the best add-on TV tuner on the market, hands down.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Canopus Total 3D	May '97 p. 156	$299	Canopus Corps *www.canopus-corp.com* (408) 467-4000	It's a good software and hardware bundle, has an easy installation, and unbeatable game support.	Expect a few display glitches (flickering screens and color flashes).	If you're looking for good solid 2D performance and quality 3D acceleration — and want cool new toys to boot — check out the Total 3D.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond Monster 3D 	July '97 p. 229	$199.95	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamond-mm.com* (800) 468-5846	Excellent performance; very good software support; easy to install; lets you use your existing video card.	If your video card is a pig, the Monster won't speed things up on your 2D graphics; 3D acceleration games can't run in a window.	If you're willing to pony up a little extra dough, you're looking at some remarkable 3D acceleration.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Hercules Stingray 128/3D	September '97 p. 218	$299	Hercules *www.hercules.com* (510) 623-6030	Melds the incredible 3Dfx Voodoo Rush accelerator with excellent 2D on a single-slot card.	Problems with early drivers, no VESA 2.0 support; some incompatibilities with games written for original Voodoo Graphics chip.	Quite simply, this is an excellent 3D accelerator that does away with the few drawbacks the stand-alone 3Dfx cards had.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Jazz Adrenaline Rush 3D	November '97 p. 342	$215	Jazz Multimedia *www.jazzmm.com* (408) 727-8900	Fast 3Dfx Rush acceleration; stable drivers; VESA 2.0 support in hardware; nice bundle of games.	*GLQuake* still not up to par with Voodoo Graphics boards.	This is the best Voodoo Rush card yet, making it the best gamer's video card to date.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Number Nine Revolution 3D	November '97 p. 341	$349	Number Nine *www.nine.com* (617) 674-8595	This card is pretty easy to install and it has a nice little display utility.	High price; average Windows 95, DOS, and Direct3D performance; doesn't measure up to good gaming boards.	Number Nine's Revolution 3D is simply not a gamer's card. You can find better gaming cards for the same amount of cash.	
RealVision Flash 3D	August '97 p. 154	$149	RealVision *www.windsoronline.com/flash3d/index.html* (519) 734-8032	Awesome price for an incredible 3D solution. Easy to install.	No perks. Absolutely no full games bundled, and only two demos.	The RealVision Flash 3D is a bare-bones 3Dfx board. If extras aren't a big concern for you, then this is the board you want.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
STB Nitro 3D	July '97 p. 224	$179.99	STB *www.stb.com* (214) 234-8750	Incredible bundle of games; single board solution.	Average performance. 3D acceleration has surpassed this board, and its 2D performance doesn't set it apart from the crowd.	There's better out there, and more on the horizon. The software bundle is its strongest point, but that alone doesn't warrant a purchase.	

PC GAMER
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3rd PRIZES
Bethesda Softworks *XCar: Experimental Racing* PC game
(Approximate retail value: $50 each)

Alright, all you experimental drivers — here's your chance to prove yourselves! To celebrate the release of XCar: Experimental Racing, Bethesda Softworks is offering some jaw-dropping prizes in the PC Gamer XCar Contest. The lucky grand prize winner will walk (or more likely stagger) off with a Cyber Air Base virtual reality chair from ViRtogo, Inc.! In addition, one first prize winner will receive an all-expense paid trip to Skip Barber's Three Day Competition Course, where they'll race like they never raced before!

Bethesda is also offering five second prizes of Thrustmaster T2 driving wheel and pedals sets, while 10 third prize winners will each receive a copy of XCar: Experimental Racing from Bethesda Softworks.

To enter, all you have to do is write your name, address, and home telephone number on a 3"x5" card, and mail it to: PC Gamer XCAR Contest, P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, CA 94005. You can also enter online by filling out an electronic registration form at www.xcar.com.

Oh, and don't forget to read the small print at the right. Ladies and Gentlemen, start your entries!

CONTEST RULES

1) To enter: Write your name, address, and home telephone number on a 3"x5" card, and mail to *PC Gamer XCAR Contest*, P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, California 94005 or enter online by filling out an electronic registration form at *http://www.xcar.com*. Entries must be postmarked no later than December 31, 1997. No purchase necessary. One entry per person. No mechanical reproductions or facsimiles accepted. The sponsors are not responsible for lost, late, mutilated, illegible, incomplete or misdirected entries, which will be disqualified. Entries will not be returned.

2) Eligibility: Contest is open to U.S. residents 18 years of age or older who hold a valid driver's license at times of entry, except employees and their immediate family members of Media Technology Limited, Bethesda Softworks, MTL West, Thrustmaster, Skip Barber Inc., Imagine Publishing, and Virtogo Inc., their affiliates, subsidiaries, sales representatives, distributors, advertising agencies, promotional agencies, and printers. Contest void in Florida, New York, Rhode Island and where otherwise prohibited.

3) Drawing: Winners will be determined in a random drawing from all eligible entries on or about February 1, 1998, by Bethesda or a partnered sponsor, whose decisions are final in all matters relating to this contest. Winners will be notified by mail on February 15, 1998. Grand Prize and Runner-up prize winners will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility and a liability/publicity release within 14 days of notification or prize will be forfeited. In the event of a noncompliance, an alternate winner will be selected. Unclaimed prizes will not be awarded. Sponsors are not responsible for non-delivery of prize notifications by the U.S. Postal Service.

4) Prizes and odds of winning: One Grand Prize: 1 Cyber Air Base Chair peripheral. (Approximate retail value $20,000). One First Place Prize: Skip Barber's Three Day Competitive Course. Actual race track location will be selected based on the track nearest to the winner's home residence. First prize also includes round trip airfare and 3 nights lodging (Approximate retail value $2500). Five Second Place Prizes: One Thrustmaster Formula T2 Steering Wheel peripheral. (Approximate retail value $240.00 each). Ten Third Place Prizes: One copy of Bethesda Softworks' *XCar: Experimental Racing* PC game (Approximate retail value $50.00 each). Odds of winning prizes depend upon the number of eligible entries received. Total approximate retail value for all prizes: $24,200.00. All prizes are non-transferable. No prize substitution is permitted except at sponsor's sole discretion. Winners are solely responsible for all taxes and all other expenses not specified.

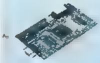
5) General: By entering, participants release sponsors from all liability with respect to use of and likeness for advertising and promotional purposes without additional compensation, except where prohibited by law. Contest void where prohibited by law and subject to all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

6) Contest Winners Responsibilities and Obligations: Winning participants in the Skip Barber Racing School are subject to all rules and regulations outlined by Skip Barber Racing in accordance with their racing programs. The winning participants will receive a gift certificate equal in value to the three day competition course, valid for one year from date of issue. Winners will be responsible for selecting the attendance dates by June 1, 1998, with a minimum of 30 days notice to contest organizers. Winning participants are responsible for arranging any and all insurance and liability coverage with Skip Barber Racing Schools.

7) List of Winners: For the names of winners send a self-addressed, stamped envelop to XCar Contest Winners, C/O Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Drive Suite 120, Rockville, MD 20850, no later than February 15, 1998. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of winners list.

8) Sponsors: Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Drive, Suite 120, Rockville, MD 20850. Virtogo Inc., 2222 N. Elston Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614. Thrustmaster Inc., 10150 SW Nimbus, Portland, OR, 97223. Skip Barber Racing School, 29 Brook St., P.O. Box 1629, Lakeville, CT 06039.

GRAPHIC ACCELERATORS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
STB TV PCI	May '97 p. 156	$129, $169 (with optional FM tuner)	STB Systems, Inc. *www.stb.com* (972) 234-8750	Easy installation, works with a wide variety of video cards, good software package.	Few extras, occasionally fussy with some video cards.	The TV PCI does the job of bringing television broadcasts and video editing to the PC with few hassles and immediate results.	
Techworks Ultimate 3D model 644 	June '97 p. 128	$129.95	Techworks *www.techwrks.com* (800) 688-7466	Very low price for a 2D/3D video solution with status quo performance.	Fuzzy images at high res, no bundled software (yet).	Even with its great price, there are better options. It may be worth it to save your dollars for the new generation of 3D accelerators.	
VideoLogic Apocalypse 5D	June '97 p. 133	$299 (with 8MB)	VideoLogic *www.videologic.com* (800) 578-5644	Excellent 2D and 3D performance; unique PowerVR architecture ensures higher speeds with higher-end computers.	High system requirements; a Pentium 166+ and 32MB RAM is recommended.	The Apocalypse 5D has the best of both worlds under one roof. For all your applications, this is the card to get.	

INPUT DEVICES

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond GyroMouse	October '97 p. 292	$99.95	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	Works well on and off the desk; total wireless freedom without the need to manipulate a tiny trackball.	Extreme sensitivity can be a nuisance in precise operations; no software; battery dies very suddenly; not great for games.	This is a unique, useful gadget that's fun to use.	
Interlink VersaPoint Wireless Keyboard	October '97 p. 282	$282	Interlink *www.interlinkelec.com* (800) 340-1331	It's small and light; the most precise touchpad we've seen.	A trackball would have been better; keys are clumsy; IR communication requires line of sight, which is annoying.	We suggest that you hold out for something better.	
Logitech MouseMan Pro and SurfMan MOUSEMAN PRO SURFMAN	August '97 p. 158	$79 (MouseMan pro) $99 (SurfMan)	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (510) 795-8500	*SurfMan:* Looks neat, works in left or right hand. *MouseMan Pro:* Awesome! Every bit as good as a corded mouse — without the cord.	*SurfMan:* Awkward to use. Drag-and-drop functions are difficult. *MouseMan Pro:* Weird shape takes some getting used to.	The SurfMan has little practical value. The MouseMan Pro, on the other hand, is a reliable, responsive cordless mouse.	
Sejin FreeBoard Beamer	September '97 p. 224	$169	Sejin America *www.sejin.com* (408) 980-7550	Compact; no software to install; fits perfectly on your lap; excellent infrared sensors.	The compact keys make typing difficult. The crowed cursor makes gaming difficult.	Although good for presentations and web surfing from your recliner, hardcore gamers will want to stick with a full-size keyboard.	
Suncom G-Force Plus	October '97 p. 286	$49.99	Suncom *www.suncominc.com* (847) 229-0002	Functions as both a yoke and a wheel; its low price makes it an alternative to the high-priced wheels and yokes out there.	Inconvenient throttle placement; limited turn range; jerky vertical axis movement makes it tough to make fine adjustments.	This is certainly not a terrible controller, but it could have been much better.	

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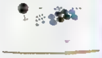
JOYSTICKS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
ACT Labs Eaglemax 	July '97 p. 224	$59.95	ACT labs *www.actlab.com* (604) 278-3650	Intuitive, comprehensive programming. Tons of buttons. Ability to program on the fly.	Uncomfortable button placement. Difficult to use hat switch and throttle together. Goofy looks.	A nice joystick for right-handed gamers. It's not perfect, but if programming your controller is a priority, this is a good choice.	
ACT Labs Powerramp 	May '97 p. 153	$59.96	ACT Laboratory, Ltd. *www.actlab.com/gamegear/* (604) 278-3650	Clear, to-the point manual with good diagrams; scads of easy-to-program buttons.	Strictly for console-style action games; control here is strictly digital, so it won't help in 3D shooters or in complex flight sims.	A good choice for the action gamer who wants lots of big easy-to-reach, programmable buttons, but it takes up a lot of desk space.	
CH Products Force FX Joystick 	May '97 p. 152	$249.95	CH products *www.chproducts.com* (619)598-2518	The Force FX really can add to your immersion in a game's world — and it has the usual CH Products high quality.	At the moment, it doesn't have a lot of software support; it is also pretty expensive.	The Force FX proves that force feedback can be done well. It's not a must-have, but it's a great addition to the system that has everything.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Gemini Maverick Joystick 	November '97 p. 342	$44.99	Gemini (201) 471-9050	Easy to use; sturdy; nice range of motion and silky-smooth movement.	Analog only; not programmable; easy to overlook with all the other joysticks out there.	The Gemini Maverick Joystick is a well-built, moderately priced joystick that takes a little getting used to, but it's worth it.	
Gravis Blackhawk 	September '97 p. 223	$34.95	Gravis *www.gravis.com* (800) 257-0061	This high quality, basic joystick has a comfortable, molded grip and is available at a pretty low price.	Odd placement of fourth button; the grip may be a little too small for some folks.	The Gravis Blackhawk is an excellent controller for action gaming, and is worth every cent of its modest price.	
InterACT Magnum 6 	September '97 p. 223	$44.95	InterACT *www.interact-acc.com* (800) 732-6866	Symmetrical for right-handed and left-handed gamers. Low price makes it more appealing to folks on a budget.	Maddeningly stiff, especially with it flimsy base; base buttons are positioned awkwardly; not programmable.	The Magnum 6 is an example of good intentions gone wrong.	
Laral Group Nintendo 3D1 	November '97 p. 341	$69.99	Laral Group (516) 293-6900	The stick looks sort of cool — well, you know, in a unique classic Star Trek kind of way, sort of.	Overpriced; horribly uncomfortable; uneven spring tension; not programmable; unstable base, unreliable twist axis.	Don't let its slick looks fool you — you want to avoid this stick at all costs.	
Logitech Cyberman II 	October '97 p. 291	$99	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (510) 795-8500	Ergonomic and well built; excellent software interface makes it very easy to program.	Mind numbingly long learning curve; way too twitchy; specific drivers needed for full functionality in some games.	This controller has a very specific audience who will love it; the rest of us will prefer something easier.	
Logitech Wingman Extreme Digital 	June '97 p. 128	$49.95	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (510) 795-8500	Very ergonomic design, excellent online documentation, simple programing GUI, and it looks really cool!	Unrealistic look and feel.	An excellent all purpose joystick. Logitech has improved its excellent Wingman Extreme for its foray into digital controllers.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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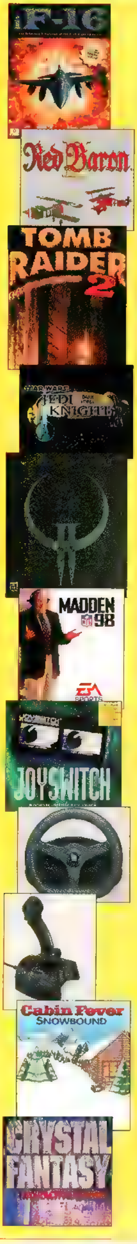

'iF16 Fighting Falcon' contains an easy to use quick start mode as well as detailed missions and campaigns Jump into combat and experience incredible graphics and high energy explosions without ever opening the manual

Interactive Magic (Simulation)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $48

'RED BARON II' You will become immersed in World War I and the career of the brave young men who pilot the flying machines in the dangerous dawn of aviation Engage in deadly dog fights, strafe an enemy aerodrome as you line up your nemesis in your sights

Sierra (Simulation)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $47

'TOMB RAIDER 2' Lara's back, and better than ever, with new moves, a new underwater environment and a whole new arsenal. Explore huge, exotic platform-based 3D environments around the world, solve puzzles and kill baddies

Eidos (Action)
Release Date: 11/97 PC CD $49

'DARK FORCES JEDI KNIGHT' In this long awaited sequel to Dark Forces, you battle a multitude of enemies and discover the secrets of the lost Jedi burial ground Master light saber combat and harness an arsenal of firepower. Develop your force powers and become a Jedi Knight or a dark Jedi All new 3D environments and characters

LucasArts (Action)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $53

'QUAKE II' Quake was just foreplay Now comes Quake II. Includes larger, mission based levels, superior artificial intelligence, and wicked multiplayer capabilities Experience smoother 16 bit graphics and real-time lighting effects

Activision (Action)
Release Date: 11/97 PC CD $47

'MADDEN FOOTBALL 98' This years update contains a new response-adjusting AI to keep you on your toes Play in all 30 3D rendered stadiums, trade and create players. Made more realistic with 10 real NFL penalties and commentary

Electronic Arts (Sports)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $46

'JOYSWITCH' Now you can jump from joystick to joystick game to game with the speed and ease of turning a switch No more reaching behind your computer to swap joystick cables on the game port. Joyswitch does it all

Lead Pursuit (Hardware)
Release Date: NOW PC $42

'CH RACING SYSTEM' Become a road warrior with the system that was built for speed and durability System comes complete with a high-performance racing wheel with 160 degree range of motion, four push buttons and foot pedals for acceleration and braking

CH Products (Hardware)
Release Date: NOW PC $85

'CH GAMESTICK 14' The comfortable base is equipped with 14 functions, a slide throttle, trim controls, two directional pads and patented gimbal Designed for both left and right handed gamers

CH Products (Hardware)
Release Date: NOW PC $60

'CABIN FEVER:SNOWBOUND' How about a weekend stuck in a cabin with nothing to do but play strip poker with 3 gorgeous women? Advanced poker engine and hilarious story elements

Art Worx (Adult)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $34

'CRYSTAL FANTASY' Venture through the cave of lust and find the secret crystal. Interact with the sexiest young jewels of the MacDaddy harem. Take snapshots of the girls and play with them in your own private portfolio

MacDaddy (Adult)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $29

COMPUTER GAMES: SIMULATION

Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price
10th Planet	11/97	$48	Earthsiege 3	11/97	$49	Heavy Gear	NOW	$48	Sand Warriors	NOW	$46
688 Hunter Killer	NOW	$46	F-15	11/97	$48	Interstate 77	NOW	$46	Screamer 2	NOW	$24
AH-64D Longbow 2	NOW	$46	F-16 Agressor	NOW	$48	J Fghtr Lghtning Strk	11/97	$43	Scrmn Demns Europe	12/97	$52
AHX-1	NOW	$47	F-22 ADF	11/97	$48	Jet Fighter 3	NOW	$35	Sierra Pro Pilot	NOW	$45
ATF 98	NOW	$46	F-22 Lightning 2	NOW	$26	Jet Fighter Fll Burn	11/97	$46	Silent Hunter 2	09/98	$46
Aces X-Fighters	11/97	$49	F-22 Raptor	NOW	$46	Joint Strike Fighter	NOW	$44	Spearhead	11/97	$49
Across Desert 1941	06/98	$48	F/A 18 Korea	11/97	$43	M1 Tank Platoon 2	06/98	$52	Spearhead Exp Pack	12/97	$29
Air Cmbt Nvy Ftrs 97	NOW	$45	FA 18 Hornet 3	NOW	$44	MS Flight Sim 98	NOW	$52	Tank!	02/98	$48
Air Warrior 2	NOW	$43	Falcon 3.0	NOW	$16	MW Mercenaries	NOW	$28	Team Apache	12/97	$44
Anarchy	02/98	$41	Falcon 4.0	04/98	$52	MW Mercenaries 3Dfx	NOW	$48	Test Drive 4	NOW	$46
Andretti Racing	11/97	$45	Falcon Gold	NOW	$29	Manx TT	NOW	$42	Tie Fightr Coll	NOW	$19
Armored Fist 2	NOW	$46	Fghtng Flcn Bck Bgdd	NOW	$26	Mech 2 Battlepack	NOW	$48	Trophy Bass Rivers	NOW	$49
Army Air Corps 42	06/98	$48	Flight Unlimited 2	NOW	$44	MechWarrior 3	06/98	$52	Wing Commander 4	NOW	$29
CART Precision Racing	NOW	$48	Flying Corps Gold	NOW	$48	Mig Alley	11/97	$46	Wing Commander 5	11/97	$46
Comanche 3	NOW	$39	Flying Nightmares 2	11/97	$42	Need for Speed 2 SE	NOW	$44	Wings of Destiny	02/98	$49
Confirmed Kill	11/97	$46	Flying Saucer	NOW	$46	Outlaw Racers	03/98	$39	X-Car Exprmntl Rcn	NOW	$48
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Deep Six	03/98	$46	Glider Wars	01/98	$32	SU-27 Flanker 2	11/97	$43	iF-22 Raptor	NOW	$42
EF 2000 V 2	NOW	$45	Harrier 2020	NOW	$45	SabrAce	NOW	$42	iPanzer 44	12/97	$48

COMPUTER GAMES: ACTION

Bugriders	12/97	$40	Dreams	NOW	$48	Hexen 2	NOW	$52	Sin	02/98	$49
Carmageddon	NOW	$45	Duke Nukm 3D Atomc	NOW	$29	Jungle Bots	11/97	$38	SpecOps	11/97	$48
Chromoform	11/97	$46	Excalibur 2555	NOW	$48	Mageslayer	NOW	$39	Star Trk Frst Contct	11/97	$48
Crusader No Regret	NOW	$34	Fallen	NOW	$41	Postal	NOW	$48	Tomb Raider	NOW	$42
D-Day 99	NOW	$38	Flesh Feast	02/98	$44	Profiteer	03/98	$45	Trespassr Jrssic Park	12/97	$48
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Dark Frces Jedi Knght	NOW	$53	G-Police	NOW	$44	Quake Mssn Pk 1-2ea	NOW	$29	Virus	11/97	$48
Dark Vengeance	03/98	$45	Gatherer	02/98	$42	Quake 2	11/97	$52	Unreal	11/97	$48
Dead Unity	04/98	$45	Half Life	NOW	$48	Resident Evil	NOW	$42	XS	NOW	$46
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COMPUTER GAMES: SPORTS

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Bass Mstrs Clssc Pro	04/98	$42	Heroes of Iron Grid	NOW	$44	MS Baseball 3D	NOW	$45	PGA Tour Pro 3-D	11/97	$50
British Open Golf	NOW	$24	Hooves Thunder	NOW	$35	NBA Action 98	NOW	$42	PGA Tour Pro W95	NOW	$50
FIFA Road Wrld Cp 98	NOW	$46	Jack Nicklaus Golf 5	11/97	$45	NBA Live 98	NOW	$45	SimGolf	NOW	$19
FIFA Soccer 97	NOW	$45	Kick Off 97	NOW	$44	NCAA Football 98	NOW	$45	Tony LaRussa 4	NOW	$42
FPS Baseball 98	NOW	$28	Legends of FB 98	NOW	$39	NFL QB Club 98	NOW	$42	Triple Play 98	NOW	$45
FPS Football 98	NOW	$29	Links LS 98	NOW	$33	NHL Breakaway 98	NOW	$42	World Series BBall 98	NOW	$42
FPS Golf Bundle	NOW	$48	Links LS Cng Ctry Clb	NOW	$19	NHL Hockey 98	NOW	$45	Worldwide Soccer 98	NOW	$39
FPS Skiing	NOW	$47	Links LS Davis Love	NOW	$25	NHL Power Play 98	NOW	$34	Wrld Cup Glf Dor Bch	NOW	$19

COMPUTER GAMES: HARDWARE

3D Magic Accelerator	NOW	$126	CH Mach 3 Joystick	NOW	$25	Gravis Y-Cable Adptr	NOW	$10	Space Orb 360	NOW	$75
Altc ACS55 Spker Sys	NOW	$152	CH PC Gamepad	NOW	$19	Grv Grp/Gm Pad Adpt	NOW	$19	TM F16 TQS	NOW	$108
Assassin 3D Contllr	NOW	$59	CH Pro Pedals	NOW	$80	Labtc CS700 Spkrs	NOW	$34	TM F22 Pro	NOW	$128
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CH F16 Fighterstick	NOW	$100	Diamnd 3D 2000 2MB	NOW	$110	MS Sidewinder Pro	NOW	$44	TM Phazer Pad	NOW	$47
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CH Jane's Combt Stck	NOW	$69	Gravis PC Gampd Pro	NOW	$26	Sound Blaster 64 Val	NOW	$149	Yamaha SBS 300	NOW	$88

COMPUTER GAMES: ADULT

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JOYSTICKS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro	November '97 p. 345	$149.95	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com/sidewinder* (800) 429-9400	Very comfortable grip; intuitive programming interface; good, solid feel of various forces; lots of features.	Expensive, the base is huge; some of the buttons are poorly placed.	Microsoft has introduced an awesome force-feedback joystick with plenty of perks.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Saitek X36 Flight Control System	October '97 p. 283	$149.99	Saitek *www.saitek.com* (310) 212-5412	Loads of programmable buttons, knobs, and sliders; sturdy, comfortable; easy to program.	Joystick's button configuration in CH emulation mode is a little awkward; could've used better documentation.	With its balance of functionality and low cost, the X36 combo may well be the best buy going in high-end PC controllers.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Suncom FX1000	November '97 p. 336	$14.99	Suncom *www.suncom-inc.com* (847) 229-0002	Cheap, comfortable; not a bad little stick.	Flimsy, imprecise, and no extras — exacly the lows you'd exect in this price range.	For the price, this is a decent joystick, but just a little more cash will get you a much better one.	

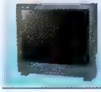
MISCELLANEOUS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
First-Person Assassin 3D	August '97 p. 150	$59.95	First-Person Gaming, Inc. *www.fpgaming.com* (888) FPGAMING	Versatile and easy to master; offers digital control with any joystick.	Not a stand alone 3D controller; requires unique driver for each game.	It's easier to learn than the new 3D controllers. It is not, however, a six axis monster like the controllers it competes against.	
VRex VR Surfer	November '97 p. 336	$99.95	VRex *www.vrex.com* (888) 877-8733	The visual effects are pretty cool; support for using it online with 3D pictures.	Expect a splitting headache after 15 minutes; the glasses are awkward to wear.	Although entertaining, the pain will make most users uncomfortable before finishing even a single level of *Descent II*.	

MODEM

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
U.S. Robotics Sportster 56K	July '97 p. 230	$219	US Robotics *www.usr.com* (888) 877-9896	Reliable; easy to install; downloads are about 50% faster than with a 28.8bps modem.	Contrary to the hype, the 56K is not twice as fast as a 28.8 modem; your internet provider may not support x2 technology.	If you can look past the marketing voodoo, you'll see a well-made modem that downloads data a little faster than your 28.8k.	

MONITOR

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Princeton Arcadia AR3.1 	September '97 p. 222	$1,199	Princeton *www.prgr.com* (800) 747-6249	Huge screen; nearly flat display; as simple to use as any monitor.	Low definition makes non-entertainment computing difficult; poor sound; resolution limited to 800x600.	This succeeds at everything it tries to do. It's a big-screen monitor with a relatively low price and is perfect for a living-room PC setup.	

SOUND CARDS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Creative Labs AWE64 Gold	June '97 p. 133	$249.99	Creative Labs *www.ceaf.com* (408) 428-6600	Low distortion and noise; 4MB of RAM means better MIDI; 64 MIDI voices.	32 of those 64 voices are software based, limiting their usefulness significantly.	Kind of expensive. It tops other Creative cards, but it doesn't have the sound quality of products from Turtle Beach and Yamaha.	
Diamond Monster Sound	September '97 p. 217	$199.95	Diamond *www.diamond-mm.com* (800) 468-5846	It has to be heard to be believed; three-dimensional sound through two speakers.	Not many games support the Monster — at least, not yet.	The technology is solid; with any luck, it'll be a success, but you may want to wait to see what support it gets from game developers.	
Guillemot Maxisound Game Theater 64	August '97 p. 157	$199	Guillemot International *www.guillemot.com* (800) 967-0863	Excellent, clear sound. Supports two or four speakers. Generous bundle of audio utilities...	... which left room for one mediocre game. Installation may require some tweaking for legacy game compatibility.	This is a nice, full featured sound card for gamers and PC music enthusiasts, and it's offered at an excellent price for all of its features.	
miroMedia Surround	August '97 p. 150	$99.05	miroMedia Surround *www.miro.com* (800) 249-miro	Excellent Dolby sound. Installs easily and is simple to use, 5-speaker surround sound is great with the games that support it.	Not a lot of game support. Non-Dolby effects are weak.	This well-designed board works great as a Dolby Pro Logic device; if that's important to you or you're an audio enthusiast, check it out.	

SPEAKERS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Altec ACS48 PowerCube Plus	November '97 p. 346	$149.95	Altec Lansing *www.altecmm.com* (800) 258-3288	Excellent sound; a solid, well-built subwoofer; compact satellite speakers make them ideal for a crowded desktop.	Less-than-ergonomic design makes these speakers less user-friendly than they could have been.	These are great speakers with just a couple of weaknesses.	
Cambridge SoundWorks PCWorks	October '97 p. 286	$99	Cambridge SoundWorks *www.hifi.com* (800) 367-4434	Nearly as good as Cambridge's other fantastic multimedia speakers — only smaller and less expensive.	No tech support; relatively low powered.	Cambridge SoundWorks has broken a price/perfomance barrier. This is an excellent system if you're on a budget.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Cambridge MicroWorks	June '97 p. 127	$349.99	Cambridge SoundWorks *www.hifi.com* (800) 367-4434	Unbelievable clarity and precision in a small elegant package; lots of power for serious output.	Priced for purists only; won't appeal to gamers who want lots of frills and knobs to twiddle with.	They're on the costly side, but you'd have to spend hundreds more for better sound from compact speaker system.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond Audio S2 Multimedia HPM-4060	June '97 p. 127	$449.99	Diamond Audio Technology *www.diamond-audio.com* (310) 582-1121	These speakers have solid construction, ample power, and impressive accuracy.	High end means high priced; 3DSP expander adds some noise.	If you've got the frogskin for a high-end multimedia speaker setup, the HPM 4060 belongs on your short-list of contenders.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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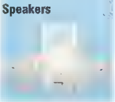
SPEAKERS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
MIDILand Crescendo and Capricccio CRESCENDO	October '97 p. 287 CAPRICCIO	$79 (Crescendo) $199 (Capriccio)	MIDILand *www.midiland.com* (909) 592-1168	*Crescendo:* Good sound for the price; easy setup. *Capriccio:* Bone-busting bass; lots of sound control.	*Crescendo:* Awkwardly placed volume control. *Capriccio:* too may cables.	Budget-conscious gamers should look at Crescendo, while audiophiles may want to check out the Capriccio.	
Panasonic EAB MPC250 	August '97 p. 154	$149	Panasonic *www.panasonic.com* (800)742-8086	Fairly attractive and streamlined design. Nice bass kick from the subwoofer. Attractive price.	Middle-of-the-road sound. Touchy treble control. Inconvenient subwoofer volume.	These middle-of-the-road speakers are a nice upgrade from a pair of cheapies, and you'll have money left over to spend on games.	
Platinum Sound SRS 2000 	November '97 p. 346	$179	Platinum Sound *www.platinum-sound.com* (602) 368-9490	Plenty of power; SRS enhances music CDs and can be turned off for PC audio.	Poor sound quality; all controls placed on subwoofer.	Platinum sound's SRS 2000 speaker system just doesn't stack up. In this price range, you can probably do much better.	
SSI MTS 100 Speakers 	November '97 p. 335	$179.95	SSI Products (800) 845-4774	Easy setup; lots of control over sound level and balance; genuine Dolby Surround.	Under-powered; below-average sound quality; not many PC games support Dolby Surround.	If you've just gotta have surround, this is a good integrated solution — but don't expect great sound.	

SYSTEMS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Falcon Mach V 	June '97 p. 130	$3,495	Falcon Northwest *www.falcon-nw.com* (800) 258-6778	Fast, powerful, and upgradable. Able to do justice to any game on the store shelves. Excellent customer service.	Very high price.	If your reason for purchasing a PC is to play games, try Falcon Northwest. They'll build an excellent PC tailored to your preferences.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Gateway 2000 Destination D5-200 	September '97 p. 212	$3,748	Gateway *www.gate-way2000.com* (800) 846-4208	An excellent PC-based home entertainment system at a great price; fully configured for gaming; very good surround sound system.	The current models lack 3D acceleration, but that should be remedied by the time you read this.	Gaming on a big screen has never been easier.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Intergraph TD-25 	July '97 p. 220	$2,873 (with monitor)	Intergraph *www.ingr.com* (800) 763-0242	A fast system with exceptional video acceleration. Nice clear monitor.	Few external drive bays. Lackluster games bundle. No game controllers offered for order.	Although its inexperience in the gaming market showed, Intergraph demonstrated that it knows how to build a solid system.	
Micron Millennia MME 	August '97 p. 147	$2,948	Micron Electronics *www.micronpc.com* (888) 349-6972	The system is easy to set up and get running; the speakers sound great; comes with some cool games.	There's no support for the 16-bit real-mode drivers for an MS-DOS reboot; the Yamaha sound card can get fussy.	It's a nice system for the price, but there are better, more complete systems out there for just a little bit more.	

SYSTEMS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
NEC PowerPlayer 3020	October '97 p. 278	$2,599	NEC *www.nec.com* (800) 632-4636	This is fairly user friendly; it has a generous software bundle; almost all components are top-notch.	The proprietary system board limits upgrade potential; case doesn't leave much room for expansion.	This is an excellent gaming system, but gearheads may be frustrated by its limited expandability.	
Recompute Gamester	November '97 p. 330	$1,789	Recompute *www.re-compute.com* (800) 510-8414	Good price; Direct3D and Rendition accelerated games run very well; well put together and easy for beginners to set up.	Generally low-end components (except the Screamin' 3D); can't do justice to some non-accelerated games.	The Recompute Gamester is ideal as a low-cost, entry-level computer, but power gamers may be disappointed.	

ULTILITY

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
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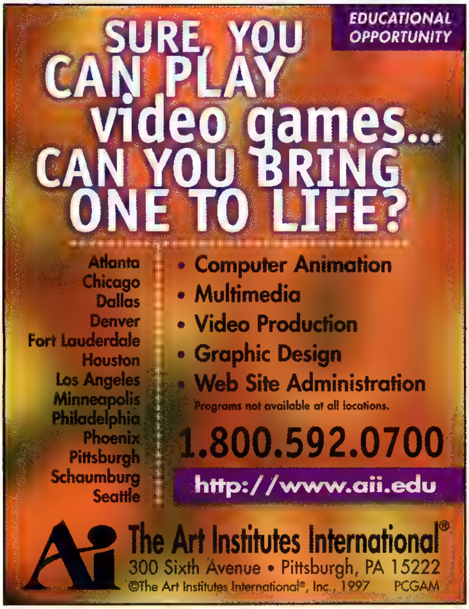

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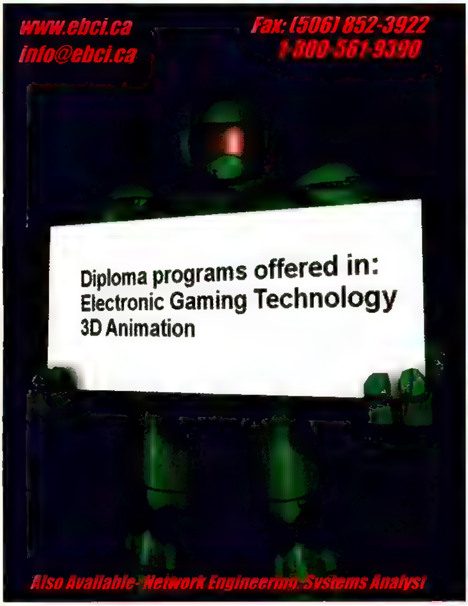

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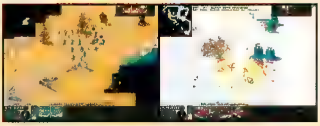

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"I'd about given up you, Ryan," said Devon, as a smile spread across his face. "For 16 months, I've been waiting for you to show some chutzpah. I thought I saw some signs of life when you started sorting the mail alphabetically, which hadn't been done at Devtech Industries before. But when I called you in to question you about it, you crumbled. Maybe marrying my daughter was the kick in the pants you needed. Hmmm..."

Devon turned in his brown leather chair to stare out of his 23rd-story office window at the Eiffel Tower. "Let me ask you something, Ryan. Do you like the outdoors?"

Ryan thought for a moment trying to figure out what his father-in-law could be leading up to. Finally, he just said, "Of course, sir."

"Good," Devon said as he swung around. "I'm sending you to South America. I want you, Ryan, to find the fabled Brazilian Blue-Ass Monkey..."

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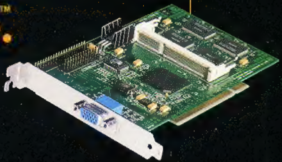

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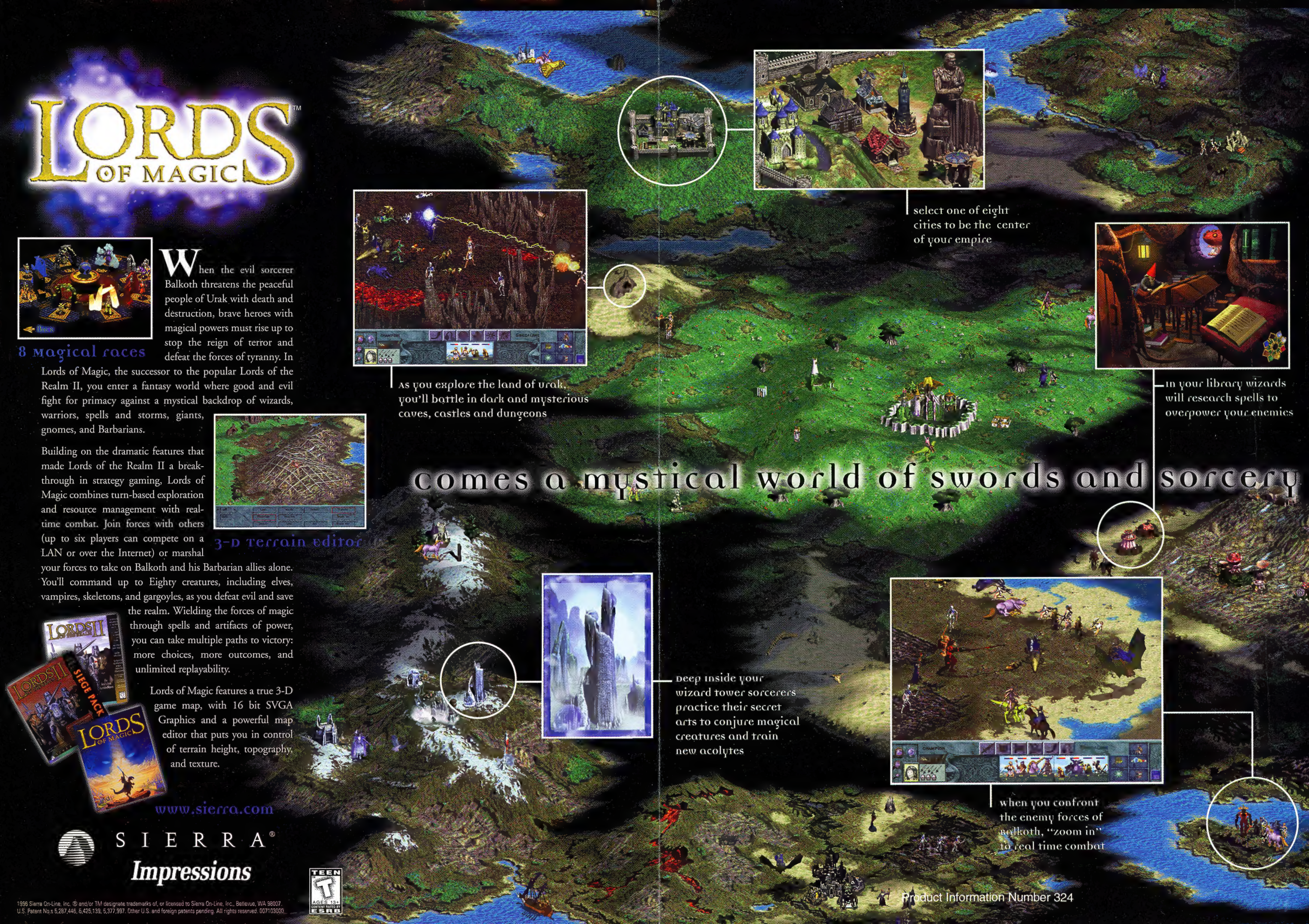
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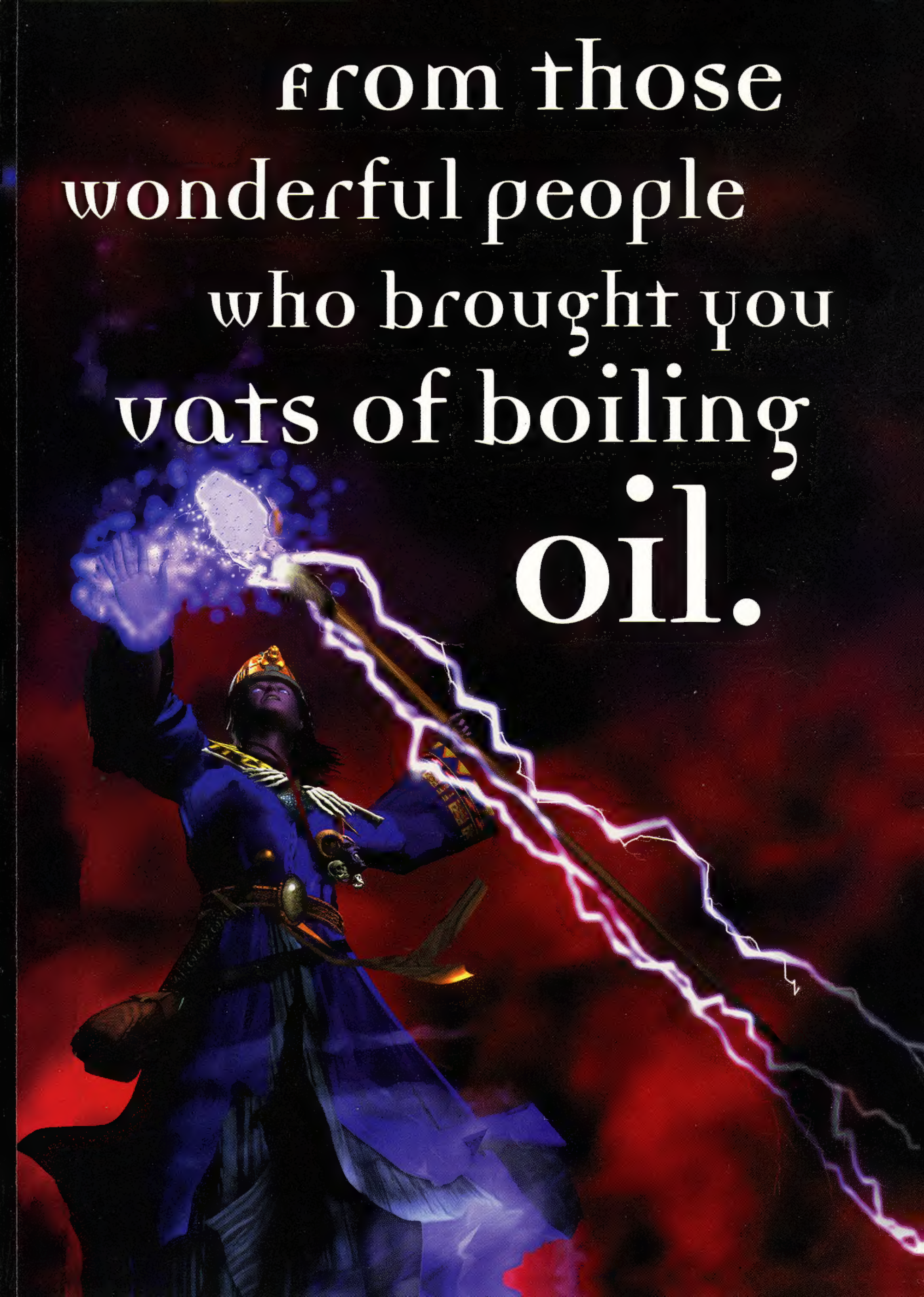
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